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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
POETS AT WAR:
A STUDY OF POLITICAL POETRY DURING
THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Poets at War: A Study of Political Poetry During The English Civil War" submitted by Audrey Mary Pattison in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effects of the English Civil War on the poets writing at that time. The first chapter discusses why and how writing on contemporary political events, in both prose and verse, first became established as an important genre during the Civil War. One result of the war was to induce poets to write strongly propagandist verse on behalf of the side they supported. The body of the thesis is concerned to trace the effects of this on the evolution of English poetry in this period. For this purpose, the poets are divided into major and minor writers of political verse, the former group including Cleveland, Brome, Denham, Cowley and Wither. Their political poetry is compared and contrasted with the work of other poets, who for various reasons produced little propagandist poetry during the war. This group includes Lovelace, Suckling, Cartwright, Herrick, Milton and Marvell.

Questions raised by this grouping are dealt with in the chapters on each major political poet, and in the final chapter: notably, why the puritan poets were in a minority, and why the major political poets and the major poets of the period are almost mutually exclusive groups (which was not true in the age of Dryden). Two answers are put forward: that the political poets were developing a genre which was new to them, as was the experience of writing for a mass audience. They were also writing under the pressures of a civil war which was laying the foundations of a new social and political structure. The issues were settled on the battlefield, not across the floor of Parliament, and in these conditions political

poetry was mostly hurried, very much tied to current events, and strongly partisan, both in praise and blame, -- and hence not likely to procure enduring fame for its authors.

The final chapter sums up the effects of politics on poets and poetry during the war period, and glances at the development of political poetry in the succeeding age, when the effects of the war were still felt, in literature and in society.

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All art is propaganda, On the other
hand, not all propaganda is art.

George Orwell
"Charles Dickens"

CHAPTER I

POETRY AND POLITICS

Political verse first became established as a genre in English literature in the seventeenth century. It reached its highest development, both in quality and influence, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and thereafter diminished in importance, its functions being transferred to other genres and media. This thesis will be concerned with showing why political verse rose to importance when it did, in what form it first arose, and what were the effects on the poets and poetry of the time.

I

The immediate cause of the increase in all political writing was civil war. For the first time large numbers of tracts, pamphlets and popular ballads were produced with politics as their major theme. This was also the period of the first newspapers, or "newsbooks." The war in itself, however, was not enough to account for this new phenomenon. It was not the first civil war in English history, but it was the first in which sufficient conditions combined to make political writing on a wide scale possible. These conditions were: a literate public, printing and a postal service enabling news to be rapidly collected and disseminated,¹ and the absence of any strong central authority to prohibit publication. Finally, there must be widespread interest in, and demand for political

news and comment.

The Civil War of the sixteen-forties² was the first in which the actual political basis of the state came into question. It was fought, not to decide who should be king, but in what manner the country should be governed. The monarch claimed the right to rule absolutely and alone, while Parliament sought to share that power with him. The political question of the rights of people and Parliament against the royal prerogative was obscured by the question of church government. The connection between the two is best summed up in James I's words, "No bishop, no king." The Stuarts believed that the King should have supreme authority in both Church and state, while Parliament,³ ultimately, was for a more democratic control of both.

Neither side was strong enough to impose its will on the other; neither was so weak, legally or actually, that war was impossible. It therefore became inevitable. Both the political and the religious issues involved all the people, and both sides were therefore eager to spread information and propaganda, to gain their support. One of Parliament's earliest victories over the King was the abolition of the prerogative courts, including the Court of the Star Chamber, in 1641. This Court had formerly exercised the power of censorship over all publications. For a time neither side possessed this power, and the resulting flood of political publications of all kinds, accompanied by an increased demand for them, meant that attempts to re-impose censorship by Parliament were hardly successful until the war was over.

II

The war thus meant an increase in all political writing, including poetry. It also had a profound effect on the form which political poetry took.

Political writing, like politics itself, is concerned with the exercise of power in the state: who shall govern, how they shall achieve or maintain power, and by what means and to what ends they shall use it. A writer may describe, analyse, or seek to influence any or all of these aspects of government. So long as the ruling power is autocratic, and accepted as an unalterable fact of life, political writing is strictly limited to neutral description or abstract theorising, usually in prose, or else to praise of the government, or criticism in generalised, disguised or underground forms, found in both prose and poetry. Any writer who seeks to influence the exercise of power must address himself to the government, not the people at large, for they have no means of directly influencing the politics of their rulers.

This was the situation in England under the Tudors and the first Stuart kings. Power over both Church and state was in the hands of the monarch, who could suppress and punish any criticism. Political news was forbidden. Poets who wished to comment on the political situation turned to allegory, panegyric which obliquely suggested changes in policy, or satire on carefully selected subjects.

Once Parliament rose to challenge the King's authority in the state, it became possible for both writers and their public to choose sides. The propagandist nature of political poetry came to the fore, as

the poets, having made their own choices, sought to persuade the public at large to follow them. Thus poetry became openly propagandist, and at the same time, partisan. The urgency of the war situation exacerbated both qualities in political verse, as in most political writing. War does not offer favourable conditions for the thoughtful and impartial consideration of the merits or demerits of opposing sides. It is rather a time for attack and defence: in literary terms, for invective or eulogy, to catch the attention of King, Parliament or people, and aiming not simply to comment, but to convince.

The three approaches open to a propagandist are to attack the opponents, to encourage his own side, and to persuade others to join that side. Any and all of these intentions may be present in the same poem, in differing degrees. Satire illustrates the first approach at its strongest, panegyric the second. The third approach, at its purest, is usually signalized by moderation either in praise or blame, if not by a direct appeal for compromise: but compromise which favours one side. It is the least partisan of all, but poems demonstrating this approach were in a minority during a war between such irreconcilable opponents.

Joseph Frank, in Hobbled Pegasus, gives tables showing the percentages of partisan, neutral, and non-political ballads published between 1641 and 1660:

Royalist	43%,	Puritan	24%	
Neutral	2%,	Non-political	31%.	(7)

The overwhelming proportion of committed, as opposed to neutral political ballads suggests, though it cannot prove, that a truly neutralist stand was rare at all levels of political writing during the war.

III

The effect of the war, and of the sudden possibility, even necessity, of writing propagandist poetry for a wide audience, will be studied in detail in relation to individual poets. In general one may say that only the balladeers had little need to adapt their style. They were already practised in appealing to the public at large, even though censorship meant that few ballads had been written on political themes until this period.

Frank's figures reveal what is at first sight a surprisingly low percentage of puritan ballads written during the Interregnum, little more than half the percentage of royalist ballads. The figures are surprising only because the Puritans were finally the victors, yet not even in the twelve years of the Commonwealth were enough ballads written on their side to match the amount of royalist verse. The reasons are not hard to find. The Puritans, unlike the Cavaliers, had no tradition of poets and poetry. They were unpractised in poetry, and as suspicious of it as they were of drama. The ballad, fulfilling the rôle of the tabloid press today, was a particularly uncongenial form. But they were also unused to what may be called "pure" poetry, whose writers were almost all centred on the universities and the Court. The literature of the Puritans was the Bible, religious tracts, and sermons. Their propaganda was spread by preachers and parliamentary journals, not by poets.

For the poets⁴ attached to the Court, or the two universities, verse was a natural means of expression, but even for them, style and subject matter were new. The subjects of their poetry, before the outbreak of war, were usually the Court itself, love or religion. They

wrote of, and to, their mistresses, their monarch⁵ or their God. Above all, they wrote for their own social group, and within long-established conventions, and were not concerned with attracting a mass-audience. Of their favourite forms, only the eulogy and the epitaph were easily adapted to propagandist purposes. Praise of national heroes, living or dead, is one of the earliest themes in poetry. When the nation is split by civil war, such praise of leading figures on either side becomes almost automatically political propaganda, either as a defence of the status quo or in support of those who would establish a new order. In addition to these two forms, poets who wished to support their side in verse also turned to other genres which they had less frequently adopted, notably satire and the ballad itself. Both of these were suited to "attacking" propaganda, and to addressing a wide audience.

The demands of writing for the public at large, rather than a defined group within society, also forced poets to adapt their style. Two main influences are recognised in Caroline poetry, the metaphysical and the classical. The former style could be striking and colloquial, but it was also complex, while the latter had clarity, but could be too restrained and remote for propagandist impact. Neither was ideally suited to persuading the people of the rights and wrongs in a war involving them all. The mingling of the two styles in the Caroline lyric was rather different from that required in political verse, where clarity, force and striking wit were more important than grace, learning, and complexity.

The adaptations which took place were possibly no more, and no less conscious than those at any stage of poetical development. Nevertheless, a war which affected the very basis of English society could not be without

effect on the poets in that society, and hence on the progress of English poetry. An examination of the work of some of the major political poets⁶ in this period will show how successfully they made these adaptations, and with what results for their later reputations, and for English poetry as a whole.

CHAPTER II

JOHN CLEVELAND (1613-1658)

Cleveland's high reputation among his contemporaries was chiefly due to the poems he wrote during the Civil War: "to the King's Cause, for which indeed he appeared the first, if not only, Eminent Champion in Verse against the Presbyterian party."¹ In Winstanley's Lives of the Most Famous English Poets (1687), Cleveland is accorded more pages than any other poet, and his services and sufferings during the war are given at least as much attention as his poetry. The style of the latter, "pregnant with Metaphors, ... difficult at the hearing, plain at the considering thereof,"² was imitated enough to give rise to the expression "Clevelandizing." There were twenty-five editions of his works between 1647 and 1700,³ but after this he fell from favour, since he belonged to the "race of writers that may be termed metaphysical poets."⁴ Though that "race" is once again admired, Cleveland is still criticised for his too great exuberance of metaphor. He plays with conceits like a juggler with coloured balls, and, like the juggler's, his work is both dazzling and difficult; though it may be immediately striking, it has little lasting significance. These qualities, however, do not disqualify him as a political poet, the rôle in which he is considered here.

"Upon the King's return from Scotland" (2) provides an opportunity to study Cleveland's "conceited" style at its purest, when used in royal panegyric, directed at the Court, not the public. The poem dates from

1641, after the King's second Scottish campaign. His journey and return are made to suffer every possible and impossible comparison, on the basic premise that the monarch is an omnipresent power and thus cannot travel from place to place. The couplets hammer home statements and resolutions of the paradox, with metaphors and similes involving every branch of learning, from biology to ballistics. Many of the conceits are adapted from an earlier poem, "Parting with a Freind upon the Rode" (63) which suggests that the panegyric was rather a poetical exercise than the result of genuine inspiration. Charles is the sun of England (2, 1.2) and the soul (2, 1.3). He is also compared to a mother sheep (3, 1.17) and a spider (1. 21). The extravagance is all the more striking for being organised in the semblance of a logical argument: "Or grant he went ... yet ... So ..." (2-3, 7-12). This is an example of Cleveland "the highest Panegyrist,"⁵ and the highly metaphysical poet. It is panegyric as written by a university wit, not a courtier, and is too complicated to be effective as propaganda, except of the type which conforms to and confirms the attitude of the person or party addressed. Panegyric, whether simple or complicated, usually ignores any unpleasant facts. In this case, Cleveland does not mention that Charles' second Scottish campaign had failed in its object of strengthening both his own position and that of the Anglican Church in Scotland. This is poetry to satisfy a clique and only political propaganda insofar as it re-iterates their doctrine of the semi-divinity of the monarch.

His contemporaries regarded Cleveland not only as the "highest Panegyrist" but also as the "smartist Satirist" on the royalist side, and he is now generally recognised as the first true political satirist in English literature.⁶ Yet apart from "The Rebell Scot", few of his political

satires are still read. They suffer from the most obvious handicap of such verse, topicality. Cleveland's immediate predecessors, Hall, Marston and Donne, had revived satire in the classical modes of Horace, Juvenal and Persius. Their subjects had been typical, not topical. Identifiable attacks on persons or parties had been avoided, or disguised by a deliberate roughness of style or obscurity of reference. This tradition of roughness and learned allusions is found in Cleveland, and combined with purely contemporary subject matter and references, which today cannot be understood without a wealth of annotation. Both increased his popularity in his own life-time. His learned allusions and far-fetched conceits were fashionable among the group supporting the King, and his topicality made him accessible to the public at large.⁷ Both factors afterwards led to an increasing neglect of his poems. A close examination of his satires is necessary to show why they were so popular, and therefore, presumably, effective in their own time.

Cleveland describes the satirist's technique as he saw it in an early poem "On the Pouder Plot"⁸:

I neede not call thee from thy miterd Hill
 Apollo, anger will inspire my quill.
 If nature should deny, rage would infuse
 Virtue as much as could supply a muse.
 Satyres run best when Clashing tearms do meet,
 And Indignation makes them knock their feet.
 To bee methodicall in Verse, & rhyme
 In such inuectives is the highest crime.
 Who Euer saw a fiery passion breake
 But in abruptnes? thus my pen must speak
 Make at Each word a period, which may show
 As Cornes of powder, & then fire the row
 With sharp articulate blasts, which breathing on
 Those lines, may inflame each hot expression.

(72, ll. 1-14)

Cleveland's satires conform to this description. His verse shows

anger or contempt tempered by a humour as clever and lacking in restraint as his conceits, and an abruptness which constantly jars the reader's attention. His striking openings fulfill a principal requirement of political verse in catching the attention immediately, but the abruptness of the final couplet is less impressive. The satire is often cut off rather than concluded.

"The Dialogue between two Zealots,"⁹ probably dating from 1640, is apparently the earliest example of Cleveland's satire of the King's opponents. Its subject is religious, the Oath which, it was hoped, would be acceptable to both Anglicans and the Puritans among them, by the insertion of "etcetera" rather than a precise definition of how the Church was to be governed.¹⁰

Cleveland imagines two Puritan ministers meeting to expound the iniquities of this phrase. His tone is one of contemptuous ridicule, both in direct description, and by the indirect report of their conversation. Their poverty is to be laughed at, while their conversation can only end in drunken fervour "While all that saw and heard them jointly pray/ They and their Tribe were all Etc." (5, ll. 61-62). The "Etc." is cleverly used throughout for comic point, and Cleveland manages some shrewd hits at the eccentricities of Puritan beliefs and behaviour (as seen through orthodox Anglican eyes): for example, their preference for "inner light" over biblical study:

.... the point is nice,
I never read on't, but I fasted twice,
And so by Revelation know it better
Then all the learn'd Idolaters o' th' Letter.

(4, ll. 19-22)

The references are almost all to contemporary events, to the

Scriptures, or to common sayings. In contrast to "The King's return," there are no complicated and compressed conceits, no excessively learned allusions. Both subject and style indicate that this was intended for a wider audience than "The King's return." That was for Royalists alone, this was both for those already convinced, and those standing neutral on the question of the King's church policy.

In the poem "To P. Rupert" also known as "Rupertismus" and probably written in 1642, Cleveland is obliged to combine panegyric and satire. For this paradoxical combination, he adopts a method which was to be a favourite among the cavalier poets writing during the war, the ironical reversal of all values. There is a striking opening couplet, which contains both an attention-catching first line, and a hit at Parliament's passing laws to suit its own purposes: "O that I could but vote my selfe a Poet!/ Or had the Legislative knacke to do it!" Then Cleveland opens his theme: "Faces about, saies the Remonstrant spirit;/ Allegiance is Malignant, Treason Merit:" (33, ll. 7-8). The point was valid, for Parliament, setting itself up as an equal authority to the King, and pursuing policies diametrically opposed to his, had created a double standard in the kingdom. The acts of each side were treason in the eyes of the other: each side believed that God, and the law, supported them. At this stage, the King's party, with the unbroken tradition of monarchy behind them, could undoubtedly be more confident in this belief. No parliamentary supporter could counter-attack with all their self-assurance. The scurrility which prevailed among the ballad-makers of both sides was also found in the political prose and verse of the more educated writers. In the case of the royalists, it seemed to reflect a genuine feeling that

their opponents were unworthy of respect. Thus Cleveland could mock his two Zealots for their poverty, and in this poem taunt the parliamentary general, Essex, with his impotency, "a Gelding-Earle" (34, l. 50), and others on his side as cuckolds or syphilitic. Even Rupert's dog "holds up his Malignant leg at Pym" (36, l. 126). What might have appeared mere vulgar abuse from commoners was aristocratic scorn from the Cavaliers. On the whole, however, it seems safer to ascribe what today seem to be lapses in taste to the different standards of the seventeenth century. If Milton could combine personal insult and intellectual argument in his pamphlets, then the habit was obviously too endemic to be ascribed to the particular propensities of balladeers or satirists on either side.

With Cleveland conducting his attack on this level, it is only fitting that the praise should be vigorous but not majestic. The theme of reversed values is maintained: "Could I but write a-squint; then (sir) long since/ You had been sung, A Great and Glorious Prince" (33, ll. 13-14). Though generally written in terms which the contemporary public would have little difficulty in understanding, the poem contains one typically astonishing explanation of Rupert's immunity from bullets:

Sure Love descended in a leaden shower
 To get this Perseus: hence the fatal power
 Of shot is strangled: bullets thus allied
 Feare to commit an act of Parricide.
(37, ll. 161-4)

William Cartwright (1611-1643), another university poet, and an Anglican priest, wrote an epitaph on one of the King's commanders, Sir Bevill Grenvill,¹¹ which contains the same combination of praise and attack, but which relates the two rather more successfully.

In lively, flowing couplets, Cartwright gives a portrait of the

ideal soldier, largely by castigating the self-seeking motives of those who oppose, or hold aloof from the King in this struggle, instead of seeking "to maintaine Afflicted Right" (555, l. 4). Praise of Sir Bevill's qualities as commander leads naturally to reflections on other commanders, those who caught at "an Affected Fame of Quick Dispatch" (556, l. 32), and those who led their men with "specious Lyes,/ With Revelations and with Prophecyes" (556, ll. 39-40): only the latter, of course, was unequivocally addressed to the parliamentary generals, but nothing is lost by making Sir Bevill an example for his own side, as well as the enemy. Cartwright avoids any suggestion that the death of this hero is an occasion for grief, since the whole poem is an encouragement to the royalist side. The Knight's death in battle therefore leads to a startling paradox: "Thus, He being fall'n, his action fought anew;/ And the Dead conquer'd, whiles the Living slew" (557, ll. 73-74).

This is followed by a challenge to the enemy: "You now that boast the Spirit, and its sway,/ Show Vs his Second, and wee'll give the Day" (557, ll. 81-82). Sir Bevill's outstanding valour proves that God is on the Cavaliers' side, since it can only be a divine gift. Another striking couplet dismisses with contempt the point that the enemy lost no leaders in the battle: "And though you thanke God, that you lost none there,/ Because Th' were such, who Liv'd not when they were" (557, ll. 85-86). Thus Sir Bevill's death serves in every way as an occasion for triumph over the enemy, and a means of combining praise and attack without strain. Cartwright successfully maintains a note of triumph by stressing the motif which his hero asserts in the final line: "Much Good grew from my Life, Much from my Fall."

Like Cleveland, Cartwright fell from favour at the Restoration because, although a "son of Ben," he was greatly influenced by metaphysical poetry. In his case, the later neglect was unjust, for he differed from Cleveland in using metaphysical wit not merely to startle the reader but to express the organic purpose of the poem. The paradoxes in this epitaph are necessary because the message and tone are complex. He writes of a fallen commander who conquers his enemies, an epitaph without grief, and only the striking use of paradox and metaphor will enable him to carry off the triumphant effect he aims at.

Difficulty in understanding Cartwright usually arises from the complexity of his thought or feeling, whereas in Cleveland it is often merely the result of his manner, the complexity being imposed upon, rather than derived from his theme. His references were designed to show the extent of his learning, and were possibly more comprehensible to his seventeenth century readers than they are today.

Cleveland's "Smectymnus, or the Club Divines" (23) and "The Mixt Assembly" (26) require too much knowledge of contemporary events -- and of the Bible -- to be easily comprehensible to modern readers; but not to Cleveland's public. It is significant that in these two poems, classical references are expanded in a way that would not have been necessary for a purely university audience, though without losing any of their impact:

Caligula, whose pride was Mankind's Baile,
As who disdain'd to murder by retaile,
Wishing the world had but one generall Neck,
His glutton blade might have found game in Smec.

(25, ll. 65-68)

The same poem compares "Smec" to fair-ground freaks and to a Welshman

"for he/ Weares in his name his Geneologie"¹² (25, ll. 73-74), ridicule on a more popular level. A final paragraph achieves comic absurdity by imagining the wedding of "Smec" and "Etc." "The Mixt Assembly" likewise climaxes in burlesque, when Cleveland turns their deliberations to a dance in order to present the members in a ridiculous light. The Assembly had been called by Parliament in 1643 to re-organise the Anglican church. It contained both clerical and lay representatives of the Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents. The political point of Cleveland's satire was that the members were so ill-matched that the issue of this "Fleabitten Synod" (26, l. 1) must be monstrous. None of Cleveland's allusions would be beyond the grasp of his audience -- for example, the game of "tick-tack" (26, l. 7), and the two-coloured "Royston Crowes" (26, l. 19). But their very familiarity, an advantage to the propagandist who wishes to be immediately and widely read, is a handicap to the poet who wishes to be read long after his death.

The second verse paragraph of the poem requires a knowledge of the Bible to grasp its political point, since Cleveland parallels the tribes of Israel with the units of the British Constitution, but this knowledge could be taken for granted in the reading public of the seventeenth century. Even the "εἰς Ἀδου and Elegerit" (27, l. 30) would not be unfamiliar to those who were following reports of debates in the Assembly and Parliament on the correct interpretation of those words, and this was the audience for which Cleveland designed his satires.

The topics of all these poems were of some moment in the clash between King and Parliament. A comparison between these poems and "The King's return" should show that the allusions and metaphors in the more

obviously propagandist poems covered subjects with which a wider public would be familiar, and were rather less tortuously expressed. Cleveland is never direct and straightforward: but his vigour and ability to make his subjects ridiculous evidently made up for that. Though mocking, he did not forget the political importance of his subjects. Indeed, there is greater weight behind his attacks as the war progresses, as a comparison of "The Two Zealots" and "The Mixt Assembly" will show.

After 1643, when Cleveland was forced to leave Cambridge for Oxford, and as the King's position became more desperate, the tone of his satires changed. It had been mockingly patronising in "The Two Zealots," later full of vigorous ridicule: now humour gave way to anger, mockery to bitter scorn.

"The Rebell Scot," written in 1644, after the Scots had sent an army to assist Parliament, is Cleveland's most famous satire. Many factors contributed to its success: Cleveland's growing mastery of his craft, and the greater urgency of the emotion, forcing him to write with a directness that left no place for intricate metaphor or for burlesque. And finally, an attack on a country and people which still exist is likely to have a more enduring attraction than an attack on oaths, parties and assemblies which have been largely forgotten. There is, however, no lack of topical allusions: Pym was dying, it was thought, of lice. Cleveland seizes the comparison: "And where's the Stoick can his wrath appease/ To see his Countrey sicke of Pym's disease" (29, ll. 9-10). If such a couplet is now only of interest to an historian, there are many more in the poem which cannot fail of their effect with any readers:

A land where one may pray with curst intent,
 O may they never suffer banishment!
 Had Cain been Scot, God would have chang'd his doome,
 Not forc'd him wander, but confin'd him home.

(30, ll. 61-64)

besides those for which Cleveland proffers the explanation:

The Indian that heaven did forswear,
 Because he heard the Spaniards were there,
 Had he but known what Scots in hell had been,
 He would Erasmus-like have hung between.

(32, ll. 117-120)

The poet rushes on in a torrent of insults, restraining his impetuosity only long enough to remember Charles' ancestry, and his allies in Scotland:

A land that brings in question and suspense
 Gods omnipresence, but that CHARLES came thence:
 But that Montrose and Crawfords loyall Band
 Atton'd their sins, and christen'd halfe the Land.

(30, ll. 49-52)

This check, in the middle of the poem, is scarcely noticed as such, and the final impression is one of unflagging abuse.

Cleveland's second attack on the Scots had a more complicated inspiration. "The Rebell Scot" might seek simply to rouse or confirm hatred, but "The Scots Apostasie" had to deal with their particular crimes. The rapid progress of the verse is thus hampered, and the wit of the earlier poem is absent. The Scots, in 1646, had betrayed the King, who had fled to them, hoping they would support him against Parliament. The anger which had carried "The Rebell Scot" has turned to bitterness, as Cleveland foresees "Th' Assassination of Monarchie" (67, l. 24). The vices he had earlier been content to record, are here presented as curses:

No Subject 'mongst you keep a quiet brest,
 But each man strive through blood to be the best;
 Till, for those miseries on us you've brought,
 By your own sword our just revenge be wrought.
 To summe up all -- let your Religion be,
 As your Allegiance, mask'd hypocrisie.

(68, ll. 57-62)

When this is compared with his earlier satires, a clearer picture emerges of the changing fortunes of the royalists, and the change in tone which their defeat forced on their most popular satirist. He begins with contemptuous humour and ends in bitter cursing.¹³

There is an even more interesting contrast in the tone with which Cleveland speaks of Charles in "The King's return" and in "The Kings Disguise," written five years later, in 1646. The King had fled from Oxford in disguise, and given himself up to the Scots, whom Cleveland ignores in this poem, except for a final paragraph hinting at his distrust of them. Three quarters of the poem is devoted to an expression of the poet's horror that the King should debase his image as heaven's vice-regent. It is a poem by a panegyrist whose subject has betrayed him:

And why so coffin'd in this vile disguise,
 Which who but sees blasphemes thee with his eyes?

 Oh for a State-distinction to arraigne
Charles of high Treason 'gainst my Soveraigne.

(6, ll. 1-2 and 5-6)

It seems that a belief in Divine Right, in the mystic power of monarchy, cannot survive a change in clothes: "Such is the Sacriledge of thine Attire,/ By which th'art half depos'd, ..." (7, ll. 34-35), or that the belief was a poetical, not a rational one, no longer to be maintained by the poet when the King himself was forced to abandon both the authority and appearance of a ruler: "Is't not enough thy Dignity's in thrall,/"

But thou'lt transcribe it in thy shape and all?" (6, ll. 13-14)

The greater part of the poem is taken up by this forceful display of indignation. In the closing section, Cleveland argues against himself, asking pardon of the King for his earlier presumption. Unfortunately, the counter-argument, re-establishing Charles' "divinity": "A Prince most seen, is least: What Scriptures call/ The Revelation, is most mysticall" (9, ll. 113-114) is less powerfully presented than the original reproach, and the final couplet seems to express the poet's underlying despair: "But oh! he goes to Gibeon, and renews/ A league with mouldy bread, and clouted shoes"¹⁴ (9, ll. 123-124).

Cleveland never ceased to be loyal to the monarchy, and this poem illustrates perhaps the limit of honest expression within the convention of panegyric, a struggle between what the poet knows and feels, and the form in which he must put his thoughts. The far-fetched similes are not a pure display of virtuosity, as in "The King's return," but a useful and necessary part of the poem. Cleveland was genuinely critical of the King's action, and extravagant exaggeration, rather than denial, was in this case a part of the poet's disguise.

Vaughan's poem "The King Disguis'd, written about the same time Mr. John Cleveland wrote his,"¹⁵ displays much less contradiction between the poet's attitude and the panegyric convention. The first half of the poem treats Charles' disguise positively, if unrealistically. It is assumed merely to prevent "The Rebels treason and their punishment"

(625, l. 4). When the poet confesses to a negative reaction: "But I am vex'd, that we at all can guess/ This change, and trust great Charles to such a dress" (625, ll. 27-28), the feeling is loyally suppressed: "Secrets of state are points we must not know;/ This vizard is thy privy Council now" (326, ll. 37-38). The tone of Vaughan's poem is thus quite different from Cleveland's, the only agreement being in the final couplet. Vaughan writes: "O strengthen not/ With too much trust the Treason of a Scot!" (626, l. 50) though even here, the tone is advisory rather than despairing.

One final poem by Cleveland may be quoted to show the forceful effect to be gained when honest expression struggles against conventional form. In 1641, the Earl of Strafford, Charles' most loyal servant, was executed with the King's acquiescence. An epitaph in these circumstances could contain praise but allot no blame for his death. Cleveland's response to this was 14 lines of rapid octosyllabic couplets, almost every line containing a sharp antithesis, which exactly conveyed the double-edged virtues of Strafford's loyalty: "The Prop and Ruine of the State;/ The People's violent Love, and Hate" (66, ll. 9-10). The question of his guilt or innocence was decided on pragmatic grounds "Huddled up'twixt Fit and Just" (66, l. 2), and in the powerful last lines Cleveland suggests that the rest must now be silence. Strafford's blood must not cry out against his murderers: "Here lies Blood; and let it lie/ Speechlesse still, and never cry," in the hope that this sacrifice would appease the King's enemies.

Cleveland's verse is never completely free from paradoxical, obscure or complicated expression, but the exigencies of war broke down some of the witty extravagance and replaced it by a more forceful emotional

extravagance, a "Satyricall Fury,"¹⁶ which enabled him to fulfill all the requirements of the rôle as his own age saw it. As the panegyrist should "draw all good inclinations to vertue:" so the satirist should deliver:

Blows that shakes triumphing Rebellion, reaching the Souls of those not to be reached by Law or Power, striking each Traytor to a Paleness, beyond that of any Loyal Corps, that bled by them; such Characters being as indelible as Guilt stabs beyond Death.

Cleveland's satires are very far in tone and style from those of Dryden. His tone was too violent, his matter too unstudied, his style too uncontrolled. His editors remark: "The Civil War made Cleveland a satirist" (lviii). Both the urgency of war-time writing, and the fact that he was largely an innovator may account for many of Cleveland's failings, and for his relative obscurity today, completely over-shadowed by Dryden. But the link between them exists, if only because he established the genre which Dryden later brought to perfection, foundations upon which a greater artist might build.

CHAPTER III

ALEXANDER BROME (1620-1666)

As Cleveland was the most famous satirist, so Brome was the most popular balladeer on the royalist side. Like Cleveland, he was unswervingly loyal, but never so violently partisan. The preface to his collected poems (1661) gives an amusing resumé of the excuses of gentlemen-poets for allowing their works to be published; followed by a rejection of these excuses for himself:

These reasons being laid aside, as deficient, it will be expected that I should present you with better; but, indeed, I have them not about me; For why I made these rambles, I can give no other account than a poor man does why he gets children; that is his pleasure, and this mine. And as with him in his case, it is with me in mine; having brought our brats into the world, it is our duty to provide for their preservation.¹

This attitude of careless detachment, mixed with coarseness, characterises much of Brome's political verse. There is a basic scepticism, and a certain audacious honesty, which argues against success as a propagandist. But Brome demonstrates an ability to calculate effects which turns a possible defect into an advantage.

Aubrey declares that at Cambridge, Cleveland "was more taken notice of for his being an eminent Disputant, then a good Poet,"² and his satires seem to demonstrate a rhetorician's desire to impress or dazzle his audience. Brome was an attorney, a profession in which the aim is to persuade and convince. It may be that their training had some influence on the type of poetry they wrote. Certainly Brome's verse is at once less striking and more likely to persuade than Cleveland's satires.

The ballad was a popular rather than a learned form, but Brome, the "English Anacreon,"³ followed a congenial classical model in his favourite theme, the celebration of wine, women and song, but principally the first, as a sure refuge from care. The majority of the works labelled "Political Verses" on pages 651 to 666 in Chalmers' reprint of Brome's poems, are exhortations to forget one's sorrows in drink. Chalmers comments:

He ... cheered his party by the songs and poems in this collection, most of which must have been sung, if not composed, at much personal risk. How far they are calculated to excite resentment, or to promote the cause which the author espoused, the reader is now able to judge. (637)

Whether or not Brome's poems aroused resentment, as Cleveland's did, it seems safe to assume that his scepticism prevented him from feeling the violent resentment of the satirist.

Three poems, all written in 1643, give an idea of Brome's range. "An Ode" (675) is a recognisable, without being a good, example of the cavalier style. It simply expands the central metaphor of the King as sun, and his parliamentary opponents as lesser stars who court disaster in trying to overturn the natural order. Both style and content, strongly traditional, suggest that it was aimed at the Court, rather than the public at large, in contrast to "The Saint's Encouragement" (672), his most famous ballad. This employs the popular propagandist technique of adopting the enemy persona (in this case the parliamentary Colonel Vennes), plus that of stating everything in reverse. Unlike the unoriginal and slightly awkward "Ode", this ballad has an irresistible sense of movement and verve. The penultimate line of each stanza makes a point:

Who fight for us, fight for the king,

 The wicked cavaliers did run

 He sees we stand for peace and truth,

 Our acts will bear us up to Heaven. (673)

This point is then given an ironical twist by the refrain: "The clean contrary way." The charges Brome makes are serious: that Parliament subverts the Church and the laws, and takes away the lives and liberties of loyal subjects. But the manner of the denunciation is light-hearted. While Cleveland's abusive satires could only exacerbate feelings on either side, ballads of this type might cheer the royalists without rousing implacable hatred in their opponents. In terms of immediate attractiveness, and entertainment value, they were also likely to reach a wider public than Cleveland's satires: and the first duty of the propagandist is to be widely read.

"A New Diurnal" illustrates the third level on which Brome could write. This work clearly belongs among the anonymous vulgar ballads of the period. It purports to be a true record of the week's proceedings in Parliament:

Since many diurnals (for which we are griev'd)
 Are come from both houses, and are not believ'd,
 The better to help them for running and flying,
 We have put them in verse, t'authorise their lying.

(667, 11. 1-4)

There is some fairly shrewd political comment (in particular that Parliament was not anxious for a treaty with the King, since it was safer for the members to gain their ends by outright victory -- "Monday"); but the greater part of the poem consists in smutty innuendo, sexual puns, and insult, occasionally enlivened by lines such as these: "But against

civil war their hatred is such/ To prevent it they'll bring in the Scots and the Dutch" (668, "Friday"), all designed, not only to ridicule, but to raise suspicions of Parliament among the neutral.

Again in contrast to Cleveland, a polemicist passionately involved with his cause, Brome was a pragmatist, taking the doctrine "peace at any price" as far as was compatible with loyalty, notably in "The Riddle" (664), written in 1644:

The king doth swear,
That he doth fight for them;
And they declare, they do the like for him:
Both say they wish and fight for peace,
Yet wars increase.
So between both, before our wars be gone,
Our lives and goods are lost, and we're undone.

(665, st. 5)

"A Serious Ballad," written in the following year, continues the same theme, with more overt insistence that the longed-for peace must be on the King's terms:

I love the king and parliament,
But I love them both together;
And when they by division asunder are rent,
I know 'tis good for neither. (675, st. 3)
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The king without them can't long stand,
Nor they without the king;
'Tis they must advise and 'tis he must command
For their power from his must spring.

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If the king han't's right, which way shall we?
They may vote and make laws,
But no good they will cause,
Till the king and his realms agree. (675, st. 4)

The moderate tone shows Brome a subtle propagandist, appealing to the majority of his countrymen, who would join in his plea "Come, long-desired Peace, we thee implore,/ And let our pains be less, or power more" ("The Riddle"), without an over-assertion of the King's rights. He

even manages to write a stanza on the delicate subject of Church government, in the second poem, in terms so vague they could offend no-one. Fear of censorship was not the reason for this circumspection. The conciliatory tone was worth adopting in the early stages of the war, when there was still a large peace party in Parliament, and men on both sides hoped that peace could be negotiated. The ballads of later years show fewer attempts to propitiate parliamentary supporters, but the balladeer never becomes so fierce in attack as the satirist.

"The Scots' Coranto," written in 1645, one year after "The Rebell Scot," lets the Scots speak for themselves, conveying the message that they are not helping, but taking advantage of the English:

Long have we longed for the English land,
But we're hindered still by disasters;
But now is their time, when they can't withstand,
But are their own country's wasters. (674, st. 3)

Cleveland's satire on the Scots was striking, but its very violence must defeat any aim of persuasion. Brome plays on English patriotism and suspicion of the Scot in a way far more likely to influence men's minds.

"The Commoners" is political propaganda which plays on other fears, in exhorting men to fight:

Now our lives,
Children, wives
And estate,
Are a prey to the lust and plunder,
To the rage
Of our age, (651, st. 2)

announcing, as early as 1645, that "... the king and the crown/ Are tumbling down, And our slaves are become our masters" (651, st. 1).

Apart from these propagandist appeals to the most basic human emotions, Brome's most constant theme is that sensible men will seek a

quiet life, and that all one's troubles can be forgotten in drink: "Hang up Mars/ And his wars,/ Give us drink" ("A Mock Song," 652). This hardly sounds like the message of a high-minded patriot, but the theme was popular with the Cavaliers, both before and after their defeat. "The Mock Song, by T.J." suggests that this careless attitude cost them victory:

Hold, hold, quaff no more,
But restore,
If you can, what you've lost by your drinking,
.
You tippled and whor'd till the foe overcame ye,
Gods nigs and ne'er stir, sir, has vanquish'd
God damn me.⁴

(653, st. 1)

Brome's reply is both jaunty and scornful. If the Cavaliers are inspired by sack, for their enemies it is:

Beer and ale makes you prate
Of the kirk and the state,
Wanting other discourse worth the hearing;
This strumpet your Muse is, to ballad or flatter
Or rail, and your betters with froth to bespatter
.
But we, while old sack does divinely inspire us,
Are active to do what our rulers require us,
And attempt such exploits as the world shall admire us.

(653, st. 4)

The tone of drunken boastfulness is admirably caught, even though it merely seems to confirm the Puritans' strictures. But remorseful breast-beating, and an examination of conscience, is not an attitude which would suit the Cavaliers, and Brome's fame was chiefly due to his voicing the sentiments they preferred to hear.

As the opponents firmly established their victory, after 1647, Brome sometimes adopted a serious tone, as in an undated poem "On the Loss of a Garrison Meditation," in which Brome advises his own party to turn to God for help. However, he cannot be serious without being unoriginal

to the point of tedium, nor can he sustain the dignified note for which he strains. After a conventional image of the King "Who did the sceptre of his power display/ From pole to pole," Brome declares that the King "From stair to stair now tumbles, tumbles down," a somewhat incongruous juxtaposition. It is clear that Brome no longer believes the King can win, and this is one of the few poems in which he preaches anything but drink as a consolation. In its place there is a string of pious platitudes, summed up in the concluding lines:

... potentates, or kings,
All are but frail and transitory things.
Since neither soldiers, castles, wealth, or wit,
Can keep off harm from thee, or thee from it;
Since neither strength nor honour, friends nor Lords,
Nor princes, peace or happiness affords,
Trust thou in God, ply him with prayers still,
Be sure of help; for he both can, and will. (690)

The spirit is so contrary to the bulk of Brome's war-time poetry that its sincerity must be questioned.⁵

In "The Lamentation," dated 1648, Brome uses the same serious tone in a poem warning London of the consequences of Cromwell's victory:

Cry, London, cry!
Now, now petition for redress!
Where canst thou fly?
Thy emptied chests augment thy heaviness;
.
The King, poor saint!
Would help, but can't;
To Heav'n alone unfold thy want,
Thence come thy plagues, thence only pity floweth.

(664, st. 4)

The reminder of the taxes imposed by Parliament, from which there was no further appeal (as before there had been appeal to the courts or to Parliament, from the King's demands), and, even more importantly, the claim that Cromwell's victory was a punishment, rather than a sign of approval from

Heaven -- these points were more likely to shake the Londoners than a downright denunciation of Cromwell or Parliament, particularly as not all their supporters had foreseen that the Civil War would result in such a total revolution. The denial that Cromwell had obtained a victory was also calculated to soothe the defeated supporters of the King. Though the situation had become too serious for mocking ballads, Brome had not lost his skill as a propagandist.

But a solemn Brome is not an authentic one. Defeat made him not grave, but more deeply cynical. Brome's cynicism, as much as his royalism, accounts for his version of the victorious party's attitude, as given in "The Independent's Resolve," also written in 1648:

A fig for divinity lectures and law,
And all that to loyalty do pretend,
While we by the sword keep the kingdom in awe,
Our power shall never have end.
The church and the state we'll turn into liquor,
And spend the whole town in a day
· · · · ·
We'll keep the demesnes,
And turn bishops and deans,
And over the presbyter sway.⁶ (656, st. 2)

This cynicism as to the motives of his enemies seems to extend even to the basic philosophies of the royalist side, for example, the idea of aristocracy. This is the impression given by two undated poems, "The Leveller"⁷ and "The Royalist's Answer" (657), in which the sceptical royalist confutes the democratic argument by saying it is based on envy, and that equality is against nature. Let titles, and the right to buy them, remain as compensations for those who have no other virtues. The wise man will abjure politics for a quiet life. In the final couplets, both agree:

All the name I desire is an honest good-fellow,
And that man has no worth that won't sometimes be mellow.

("Leveller," 657)

He that drinks well, does sleep well; he that sleeps well,
doth think well,
He that thinks well, does do well; he that does well, must
drink well.

("Royalist", 658)

The Levellers first rose as a group between 1646 and 1647, when the royalists were clearly losing the war. The comparatively good-humoured note in this rejection of their policies offers support for the argument that Brome was too sceptical and self-indulgent to be an extremist in hatred or support of either side.

The darkest note one can find in Brome's poetry is the sour cynicism of some poems written during and after 1648. In one, he urges all to forget the war in drink, denigrates both the aims and motives of the enemy, and ends with the advice to spend everything in pleasure:

In swearing and lying,
In cowardly flying,
In whoring, in cheating, and stealing,
They agree; and all damnable dealing.
He's a fool and a widgeon,
That thinks they've religion,
For law and right,
Are o'er-rul'd by might,
But when they should fight,
Then the Roundheads and Caves agree.

Then while we have treasure,
Let's spare for no pleasure,
He's a fool that has wealth and won't spend it,
But keeps it for troopers to end it.
When we've nothing to leave 'em,
Then we shall deceive 'em,
If all would be
Of such humours as we,
We should suddenly see
Both the Roundheads and Caves agree.

(673, st. 6, 7)

This is political propaganda directed at his own side, a "whistling in the dark" in the absence of any philosophy by which to rationalise defeat.

Brome's own political, and even religious beliefs, or lack of them, are better expressed in such poems as "On Sir G.B. His Defeat:"

Luck, wit, or valour, rule all things,
They pull down and they set up kings,
All laws are in their bosom;
That side is always right that's strong,
And he that's beaten must be wrong;
And he that thinks it is not so,
Unless he's sure to beat 'em too,
Is but a fool t'oppose 'em. (663, st. 6)

This is his authentic voice, and when he adopts it, Brome is entertaining, if not admirable. He counsels patience, not because God is just, but because such struggles always did and always will take place "So long as there's ambitious men/ That strive for domination."

"The Politician," written after the King's death, in 1649, shows Brome repeating the same message -- might is right, we are all the play-things of chance, men are given over to the lowest motives, and it is mere foolishness not to conform. The most interesting lines, politically, are in the first stanza, where he expounds a purely Hobbesian doctrine:

What is't to us who's in the ruling power?
While they protect, we're bound t'obey,
But longer not an hour. (659, st. 1)

Cynicism has taken over completely

Each wise man first best loves himself,
Lives close, thinks, and obeys,
.
For those grand cords that man to man do twist,
Now are not honesty and love,
But self and interest. (659, st. 6)

This doctrine was perhaps most congenial to the defeated Cavaliers. Their leader, claiming to be God's representative on earth, was defeated

and executed. Pious resignation would be both uncharacteristic and hard to sustain in these circumstances. Few of the Cavaliers who fought and wrote and were imprisoned for their cause showed any deep religious feeling in their poetry, and only the epitaphs on the King's death suggest that the theory of Divine Right commanded more than lip-service from them.

Brome, a minor figure as a poet, is yet a major figure as a spokesman for these attitudes. His epitaphs on Charles' death show him again a poor poet on a serious theme, but a dependable representative of cavalier reactions. In the first, "On the Death of King Charles," Charles is the royal martyr, a second Christ, dying for the sins of his people. This was the only logical riposte for those who had formerly proclaimed his semi-divinity.⁸ The opening: "How! Dead! nay, murder'd! Not a comet seen!" (690) sits incongruously with his solemn theme, and his reiteration of the paradox that Heaven gave no sign at this outrage, finally resolved by "And 'tis the height of miracle that we/ Live in these wonders, yet no wonders see" (690), gives the impression not of deep feeling but of exercise on a theme.

The second epitaph, "On the King's Death," deals more adequately with the grief felt at the death of a "wise, just, valiant, temperate man" (691), a father, a master, a king, murdered by his enemies, who now threaten to ruin his kingdom. The cause of grief stated, Brome calls to his aid philosophy: "What's pass'd can't be recalled,/ ... And things that had beginnings, must have ends" (691) -- a catalogue of commonplaces. The resemblance to Christ is again suggested: the rebels killed Charles "while he pray'd and died for them" (691). The Cavaliers must now wait in patience till God shall please to "raise the son up to the crown."

Until this happy event occurs, the reader is left with an image of Charles I in Heaven, where he "hugs his blessed change, whereby he is/ Rob'd into a crown, and murdered into a bliss": a final couplet which seems to confirm Brome's inability to turn his Muse to serious themes.

Brome's poems lack depth and dignity, but these were not qualities often found in the poets around Charles' Court. He is also lacking in cavalier grace: but he was an attorney, not a courtier. His scepticism was not merely a fashionable pose. The fibre of his mind was coarse rather than fine, and it is easy to imagine that but for the war, he would have made no mark on his contemporaries, but remained on the fringe of the group of gentleman amateurs, writing with rather less ease than they. His lyrics⁹ are competent but unoriginal, his serious poems usually awkward and unconvincing, but the ballad suited his talent and temperament, and his "drink and be merry" message was highly congenial to the cavalier party, who realised too late that this is not a slogan with which wars are won. Brome was once reproached for writing such songs: a reproach to which he replied:

Now for those robes in which you'll have me dress
My homely Muse, and write with loftiness,
Talk of state-matters, and affairs of kings,
Though know'st we've beat our head about those things
Till I'd my teeth near beat out; ...

.
. . . but my harmless lines,
If they produce a laughter, are well crown'd. (679)

Brome was well aware of his true bent. His "talk of state-matters" ranges from the message "Support the status quo as the lesser evil" to "Oppose Parliament as the greater evil." At his most typical, he deflates the pretensions of either side.

It would be too much to claim that Brome showed himself a far-sighted

politician in this, looking forward to the post-war period, when both sides would have to find some modus-vivendi, a task which extremism during the war would render more difficult. His poems in the Commonwealth period continue to counsel sack and patience in awaiting revenge. Post-Restoration events clearly confirmed his scepticism as to the justice to be expected from any ruling party.¹⁰

In the end, tolerance won over bitterness, since only thus could "long-desired Peace" be preserved, and this was the deepest desire of Brome and the majority of his fellow-countrymen.

He was the editor of Rump, a collection of cavalier songs published at the Restoration, and the introduction gives a clear picture of his political attitude at that date: tolerance with a spark of cynicism, reflecting the attitude of Charles II himself:

Now (thanks be to God) we have liv'd to that day, that there is no Cavalier, because there is nothing else, and 'tis wondrous happy to see how many are his Majesties Faithfull Subjects, who were ready to hang the Authors of these Ballads. But he that does not blot out all that's past, and frankly embrace their New Allegiance, or remembers ought but what shall preserve Universal Peace and Charity, let him be Anathema;¹¹

The introduction also gives an idea of how the Cavaliers regarded their war-time poetry:

we have not subjoyned any Authors Names; heretofore it was unsafe, and now the Gentlemen conceive it not so proper. 'Tis hoped they did His Majesty some Service, 'twas for that end they were scribbled.

Not only did the "Gentlemen" of the period regard it as unfitting to publish their poems, it seems they were unwilling to admit to these propagandist verses, "scribbled" on a popular level, very different from the traditions of courtly poetry.¹²

The war brought fame to two completely disparate poets, Cleveland

and Brome, fame which did not last, since it depended too much on the conditions which had produced it. Cleveland's forceful satires, but not his metaphysical wit, foreshadowed the prevailing form of political poetry after the Restoration. Brome's cynical tone also foreshadowed the mood of Charles II's court. Both the force and the cynicism were tempered, in later poets, by urbanity and classical restraint.

Brome was one of the most popular of cavalier poets during the Civil War, but today he is almost unread. Richard Lovelace, on the contrary, was less widely read in the seventeenth century, but now represents most people's idea of the typical Cavalier:¹³ devotedly loyal, daring in battle and gallant in defeat. This image hardly corresponds to reality, and insofar as Lovelace conforms to it, he is less representative of the Cavaliers than Brome. His contemporaries compared him to Sir Philip Sidney,¹⁴ the Elizabethan scholar, soldier, lover, courtier and poet, who typified an ideal already out of date, to which the Civil War rendered a death-blow.

Commendatory verses written for the publication of Lucasta, in 1649, by both Brome and Marvell, suggest that the times were unpropitious for Lovelace's particular talents as a poet.¹⁵ The war left him a courtier without a court, and even robbed him of his chance to achieve glory in fighting for his country.¹⁶ The poem "To Lucasta, Going to the Warres" stands out as an anachronism, the expression of a chivalrous ideal, the conflict of love and duty, which had little relevance to the circumstances of the Civil War, and could neither reflect nor influence the attitudes of those supporting the King. Only the famous last couplet, with its paradoxical twist, marks the poem as belonging to the Caroline period: "I

could not love thee (Deare) so much,/ Lov'd I not Honour more" (18).

"To Althea, from Prison," by contrast, is both the most representative, and poetically the best example of a civil war phenomenon: the cavalier prison song.¹⁷ Finding himself in prison because he was loyal to the King was a new experience for a gentleman, and each stanza in Lovelace's poem embodies one of the ideas the Cavaliers turned to most readily, to rationalise their fate.

It is typical of Lovelace that he should begin with a declaration that he is a prisoner of love, which is freedom itself. The "escape route" of the second stanza is even more typical of the Cavaliers:

When thirsty griefe in Wine we steepe,
When Healths and draughts go free,
Fishes that tipple in the Deepe,
Know no such Libertie. (78)

Brome was of course the major cavalier spokesman for this attitude,¹⁸ the more eagerly proclaimed by the Cavaliers since the pleasures of drink were denounced by most Puritans: and proclaimed with the greater bravado as failure in the war made comfort ever harder to find in ideals. The third stanza expresses their major ideal, which failed them, the King in whose service all sacrifice was worth while. The poem closes on a note at once more personal and universal:

Stone Walls do not a Prison make,
Nor I'ron bars a Cage;
Mindes innocent and quiet take
That for an Hermitage;
If I have freedom in my Love,
And in my soule am free;
Angels alone that sore above,
Injoy such Liberty. (79)

In his own "prison poem," "The Royalist," written in 1646, Brome translates these themes in a characteristic manner:

Come, pass about the bowl to me,
 A health to our distressed king;
 Though we're in hold, let cups go free,
 Birds in a cage may freely sing. (651, st. 1)

Drink and song, not ideals, are his relief: "Pox on this grief, hang
 wealth, let's sing,/ Shall's kill ourselves for fear of death" (651, st.2).
 His reference to the King mentions only his poverty as an encouragement to
 his impoverished followers:

We do not suffer here alone;
 Though we are beggar'd, so's the king,
 'Tis sin t'have wealth, when he has none,
 Tush! poverty's a royal thing. (651, st. 3)

Sir Roger L'Estrange, a prominent journalist on the royalist side
 before and after the Restoration, wrote a poem during his imprisonment
 (1645-1648) which represents a mean between Lovelace and Brome. The
 King's poverty is treated more gracefully:

When once my prince affliction hath,
 Prosperity doth treason seem

 When kings want ease, subjects must love to smart.¹⁹

He echoes the idea that he cannot be imprisoned "Whilst a good conscience
 is my bail,/ And innocence my liberty" (880, ll. 9-10) but his taste
 betrays him when he attempts wit:

These manacles upon my arm,
 I as my sweetheart's favours wear,
 And then to keep my ankles warm
 I have some iron shackles there. (880, ll. 25-28)

Lovelace's poem rests secure as the best treatment of the "prison"
 theme.

Both Brome and Lovelace wrote poems on the King's imprisonment,
 which again demonstrate their completely different reactions to the war.
 In Brome's poem the King is defiant from the first lines "Imprison me,

you traitors! Must I be/ Your fetter'd slave, while you're at liberty/
 T'usurp my sceptre, . . .," refusing to meet Parliament's terms: "Mistaken
 fools! to think my soul can be/ Grasp'd or infring'd by such low things
 as ye!" (690) The royal scorn is accompanied by the more abstract con-
 solation "Alas, though I'm immur'd, my mind is free,/ I'll make your
 very jail my liberty," which Brome never expressed on his own behalf.
 The closing lines mix defiance with a premonition of Charles' fate:
 "... tho' all your plagues you bring,/ I'll die a martyr, or I'll live
 a king."

This portrait of a boldly resolute Charles might encourage his
 dismayed supporters, but Lovelace's poem "To my Worthy Friend Mr. Peter
 Lilly: on that excellent Picture of his Majesty, and the Duke of Yorke,
 drawne by him at Hampton-Court" speaks of a real portrait, and in praising
 the painter, offers a closer reflection of Charles' mood as he remained
 a prisoner in his former palace:

See! what a clouded Majesty! and eyes (rise!
 Whose glory through their mist doth brighter
 See! what an humble bravery doth shine,
 And grieve triumphant breaking through each line;
 How it commands the face! so sweet a scorne
 Never did happy misery adorne!
 So sacred a contempt! ...

.
 That mightiest Monarchs by this shaded booke
 May copy out their proudest, richest looke.

(57, st. 1)

This poem is a rare example of royal panegyric²⁰ from this late date in
 the war (1647). It is not directly addressed to the King but is nonethe-
 less a touching tribute from a loyal courtier, the oxymora helping to
 convey the contrast between what Charles should be and what he is. The
 King was not the vigorous, defiant hero of Brome's poem, and Lovelace

seems closer to the real Charles in the closing lines of compliment to the painter:

Thou sorrow canst designe without a teare,
And with the Man his very Hope or Feare;
So that th' amazed world shall henceforth finde
None but my Lilly ever drew a Minde. (58)

Lovelace wrote other poems in this period when Cavaliers recognised defeat, and in all of them the contrast with Brome's writing on a similar topic could not be more marked, as when he writes to his friend Charles Cotton that they should help restore "A genuine Summer in each others breast" in the harsh winter of war, by companionship and wine ("The Grasshopper," 39, st. 6). The anacreontic theme is treated with more subtlety than Brome ever gave it, though the poem is somewhat marred by an obscurity of phrasing typical of Lovelace (38, st. 3 and 39, st. 9), and by a reference so topical that time has rendered it obscure: "Dropping December shall come weeping in,/ Bewayle th' usurping of his Raigne" (40, st. 8), which depends on the reader's knowing that Parliament had forbidden Christmas festivities.

It is significant that the poet who most perfectly expressed the ideal cavalier ethos was untypical of the royalist poets in general in that none of his work ever betrays scepticism or disillusionment regarding the King and his cause. "To Lucasta, from Prison" (48), dating from Lovelace's second imprisonment by Parliament in 1648, shows Lovelace facing the reality of absolute defeat, the loss of all "ideals" which might prove fit for his love, and yet asserting, without equivocation or explanation:

Since then none of these can be
Fit objects for my love and me;
What then remaines, but th'only spring
Of all our loves and joyes? The KING. (50, st. 11)

In his poetry at least, Lovelace remained an idealist when most of his fellow-poets sooner or later, accepted reality. He died in 1657, and so was not forced to realise that the society whose ideas he upheld could never be restored. The monarch could never again inspire such unquestioning devotion, nor was poetry to remain the business of gentlemen-amateurs writing for their own privileged circle, able to shut out uncongenial reality. The twin dangers inherent in writing for this social group were not always escaped by Lovelace: complexity of expression, which was a subtle compliment to the reader, and an assertion of superiority over those too ill-educated to understand,²¹ and carelessness of expression, another assertion of superiority, as proof that one was an amateur. At the Restoration, Lovelace's style and sentiments were equally out of fashion, and after Posthume Poems in 1659, he was not reprinted for 150 years.²²

Sir John Suckling stands second only to Lovelace, in popular estimation, as the typical Cavalier, despite the great contrast between them. As a result of this contrast, Suckling was far more highly esteemed by the succeeding age. Natural and easy where Lovelace, attempting complexity, could be obscure, insouciant and sceptical where Lovelace was serious -- though never profound. For Dryden, Suckling's poetry expressed "the conversation of a gentleman."²³ Suckling died in exile in 1642, so that his poetry was not influenced by the war. He proves, however, that clarity and scepticism, the combination by which he is distinguished among cavalier poets, existed in English verse before the Civil War. While the experiences of the Interregnum may have led to the prevalence of these qualities in Restoration verse, it cannot be said that they arose

solely from those experiences.²⁴

Suckling's letters, written at the time of the King's first difficulties with the Scots, and Parliament, also provide proof that Lovelace's unquestioning and unthinking loyalty was by no means the rule among the Cavaliers. The most important letter is that addressed to "Mr Henry German, in the beginning of Parliament, 1640."²⁵ This offers a clear analysis of the weaknesses of the King's position, and the concessions he must make. Suckling declares that "the great interest of the King is a union with his people" (322), and almost explicitly declares that he cannot possess or exercise power without the people's support: unfortunately, nothing less than defeat in civil war could convince the Stuarts of this fact. In a phrase reminiscent of Brome,²⁶ Suckling writes that the King's counsellors should be guided by interest "which cannot err," rather than "by passion, which may" (322).

The reference to flatterers who "give much counsel, as they believe the King inclined, determine his good by his desires, which is a kind of setting the Sun by the dial," reflects on the King's isolation from reality, and inevitably calls to mind the rôle of the court poets in this respect. The few poems which Suckling addressed to the King are expressions of loyalty without blind adulation.

Suckling's letters on the Scottish and parliamentary conflicts show the same witty scepticism which informs his poetry, but also a talent for intelligent political analysis. He did not seek to incorporate political comment in his poems,²⁷ but his play Brennoralt, performed before the King in 1640, contains obvious references to the King's current difficulties with the Scots. In the second scene of act III, the King debates with

his ministers whether or not to continue the war against his unruly subjects, the Lithuanians. Melidor counsels peace, since the King is not sure of his own people's support:

For, though your person in your subjects' hearts
 Stands highly honour'd and belov'd, yet are
 There certain acts of state, which men call grievances,
 Abroad; (242, ll. 94-97)

Menseck counsels war, since a truce or reconciliation will not be credited on either side. The King points out that this war is of an unwelcome nature:

War in our own is like to too much heat
 Within, it makes the body sick: when in
 Another country, 'tis but exercise. (243, ll. 151-3)

In the play, as in the war,²⁸ the King decides to fight on, though Charles had meanwhile made the truce which Suckling's king disdained: "No, we'll not take up/ Quiet at int'rest: perfect peace or nothing" (244, l. 159-60). Suckling's scepticism, or realism, is strongly evident in these lines on the causes of war:

Religion

And liberty, most specious names, they urge;
 Which, like the bills of subtle mountebanks,
 Fill'd with great promises of curing all,
 Though by the wise pass'd by as common cosenage,
 Yet by th' unknowing multitude they're still
 Admir'd and flock'd unto.

 Then, sir, consider, justness of cause is nothing:
 When things are risen to the point they are,
 'Tis either not examin'd or believed
 Among the warlike. (242, ll. 75-81 and 85-88)

Suckling died in exile in 1642, and it is clearly impossible to predict if and how the war would have influenced his later poetry. In what we have, there is no sign of Lovelace's idealism, nor of Brome's later cynicism. A better poet than the latter, Suckling's clear-eyed

scepticism yet brings him into closer relation with Brome than with Lovelace. To judge from his letters, and from Brennoralt, however, the cavalier poet whom Suckling more closely resembles, in his efforts to offer honest counsel rather than flattery to the King, is neither Lovelace nor Brome, but Sir John Denham.

CHAPTER IV

SIR JOHN DENHAM (1615-1669)

Denham was well-known to his contemporaries both for his poetry, and for his services to the King, yet he was not a prominent propagandist for the royal cause. Part of the explanation is obvious: his involvement in the war left him no time to write. In the preface to the 1668 edition of his poems, he declared that Charles I had advised him to write no more during the war, saying: "when men are young, ... they might vent the overflowings of their Fancy" but not "when they were thought fit for more serious employments."¹ The "serious employments" included managing the King's secret correspondence. Denham did write more poetry while he was in exile with Charles II and upon his return, but nothing he later produced added to the reputation he had gained with two works written just before the outbreak of war: The Sophy, a play, and Cooper's Hill. When his other poems, and his services to the King, were forgotten, this latter was remembered and praised by Dryden, Pope and Johnson. Their praise centred mainly on the versification, but the contents of the poem, as of the play, are political, and both will be discussed from that point of view here.

An early expression of Denham's political standpoint is found in his "Elegy on the Death of Judge Crooke" (156), who died in 1641. Like Denham's father, he had been one of the dissenting judges in the famous Ship Money Case in 1638.² As the son of a judge, Denham might naturally be expected to respect the law of the land, and believe it should be

protected against encroachment, either by royal or parliamentary prerogative. This awareness of delicately balanced forces within the kingdom could be well-expressed in the balanced lines of the heroic couplet:

Great by his vertues, greate by others Crimes,
The best of Judges in the Worst of Times.
He was the first who happily did sound
Unfathomed Royalty and felt the Ground.
(157, ll. 5-8)

Crooke's decision in the Ship Money case "felt the ground" by defining the limits of the royal prerogative. Denham hints at the judge's resisting royal pressure: "Not hurried by the highest Movers force/ Against his proper and resolved course" (157, ll. 29-30), but the essence of his praise is that Crooke stood for absolutely impartial justice, unswayed by any contemporary pressures:

Whose Zeal was warm when all to Ice did turn,
Yet was but warm when all the World did burn.
No ague in Religion eer inclin'd
To this or that Extream his fixed Mind.
(157, ll. 33-36)

The poem was not published in his collected works until 1790, doubtless because of its implicit criticism of the King's attitude. Two manuscript versions are in existence, and circulation in manuscript was the preferred form among the courtier-poets at this period. It was usual, however, for their poems to be published eventually, and the long delay in this case demonstrates that political poetry has to run the hazard, not only of official state censorship, but of informal party censorship.

Denham's play, The Sophy, performed before Charles I in 1641, one year after Suckling's Brennoralt, offers further evidence of Denham's political convictions. The plot deals with a king whose troubles arise through alienation from his people and dishonest counsel from his ministers.

Men on both sides could take this as a description of Charles. Though the plot does not allow for any direct identification of the English King with Abbas, King of Persia (who eventually murders his son), it does provide opportunities for lines applicable to contemporary events, and Denham showed some courage in presenting them. Perhaps the lines in the first scene of the play were intended to excuse what came after:

Abdall: 'Tis the fate of Princes, that no knowledge
Comes pure to them, but passing through the eies
And ears of other men, it takes a tincture
From every channel; and still bears a relish
Of Flattery, or private ends.
Morat: But danger and necessity
Dare speak the truth.³

(236, ll. 50-56)

What came after included some lines in the second scene obviously applicable to Charles' recent attempts to raise money for his unpopular Scottish campaigns: (The Persian king proposes to send out an army)

Lord: Sir your Treasures
Are quite exhausted, the Exchequer's empty.
King: Talke not to me of Treasures, or Exchequers:
Send for five hundred of the wealthiest Burgers,
Their shops and ships are my Exchequer.
Abd.: 'Twere better you could say their hearts. [Abd. aside.]

(238, ft. 3)

Whether or not these lines were spoken before the King, they were printed in the 1642 edition of the play, and not cut until the 1668 edition.

A longer passage was taken from the beginning of the fourth act and published separately in 1716 (270-271, ll. 17-66). In this passage, Denham makes an analysis of the religious-political situation which is implicitly critical both of the King and his opponents: kings use the laws to give "power to their wills," not as something "given for their guide" by Heaven (270, ll. 32 and 29). Religion is made "the spur to

tyranny" (270, l. 22), while on the other side

With popular rage, Religion doth conspire,
Flows into that, and swells the torrent higher;

.
Thus whether Kings or people seek extreams,
Still conscience and religion are their themes.

(271, ll. 43-44 and 61-62)

The analysis of the developing struggle and prophecy of its future course is masterly. Once the mob has thrown off "the royal yoke" then not only the actions but the very foundation of monarchy must be questioned, and force, not authority, or laws, will become the only basis of power: a power which, inevitably, can only be maintained by the use of more force (270-271, ll. 39-60). These lines seem to indicate why Denham, despite reservations, gave his full support to the King when the Civil War broke out.

Few poets of the period showed themselves capable of such a calm and intelligent appraisal of the "state of the kingdom." Denham's control of the couplet form is also notable: the argument is presented smoothly and clearly. Occasionally the sense over-runs the couplet:

Then powers first pedigree from force derives,
And calls to mind the old prerogatives
Of free born man; ... (271, ll. 45-7)

but in general Denham shows his ability to exploit fully the possibilities of the form: the cumulative effect -- "Grow from disdain to threats, from threats to arms" (271, l. 50); the antithesis "Nor is this all, where feign'd devotion bends/ The highest things, to serve the lowest ends" (270-271, ll. 39-40); and by the variation of pauses, which both gives his comments more impact, and prevents the impression of monotonous repetition of effects.

Denham's most famous poem, Cooper's Hill, aroused the greatest praise in the succeeding age for its masterly handling of the heroic couplet. The political content of the poem, in contrast, received little comment, Dr. Johnson going so far as to call it the earliest example, in English, of "local poetry" as though it were simply a description of landscape, with "incidental meditation."⁴ As O Hehir points out,⁵ Pope was far closer to the truth when he declared that his own poem, Windsor Forest was an imitation of Cooper's Hill and Virgil's Georgics. All three are examples of "a political-didactic poem employing rural nature as the vehicle for its discourse" (13). Even without tracing the genealogy of the poem back to classical literature, one can see that it is clearly political and that it is using the conventions of allegorical and emblem poetry to disguise, or to render more poetical, its subject. The fame of Cooper's Hill at the Restoration owes much to Denham's revisions of the poem during the Commonwealth, when topical and specific references were made more general.⁶ He was also able to make the versification more smooth and balanced, which may indicate that his powers improved with practice, or simply that he wrote better when not under the immediate pressure of political events.

The original 1641 draft of the poem (79-90) will be considered first, as giving Denham's most immediate reactions to the growing threat to royal power, and therefore to peace.

Poets and kings are brought into close connection from the beginning, when he declares that Parnassus and Helicon "Made not Poets, but the Poets those:/ And as Courts make not Kings, but Kings the Court," (97,11.4-5). This is possibly a topical reference to the abolishing of the royal

prerogative courts in 1641, but so phrased that either a topical or general interpretation can be made: an obvious advantage to Denham who clearly wished to avoid tying his poem specifically to current events.

Windsor Hill, pleasant and easy of access, with its royal castle, is explicitly stated to be the "Embleme" of the King (80, l. 39). Denham goes on to deal with one of the strongest factors in favour of Charles, the unbroken tradition of monarchy and the glories it has brought to England. Unless the poem was written at the time of some Order of the Garter ceremony, it is difficult to explain why Denham devotes forty lines (81, ll. 79-118) to the subject at this stage. The obvious connection is the founding of the Order by Edward III, of whom Denham is speaking, and the fact that the stalls of the Knights are in St. George's Chapel, Windsor. Earl R. Wasserman suggests a more topical reference, the Earl of Strafford's being created Knight of the Garter at York, in 1640.⁷

The Garter insignia provide some useful symbols, particularly of how the Stuarts had united Britain, and a phrase, describing St. George "In whom the Martyre and the Souldier ioyne" (82, l. 104), which could, again, mask a reference to the recently-executed Strafford. Eight years later, the line was even more appropriate as an expression of cavalier sentiment at Charles' execution.

On the religious question, Denham again uses the past to comment on the present. From Cooper's Hill he surveys a neighbouring abbey, destroyed in the reign of Henry VIII, and exclaims: "... may no such storme,/ Fall on our tymes, where Ruyne must reforme" (83, ll. 127-128). After an indictment of the Tudor king,⁸ he speaks directly of modern times. Religion is no longer too lazy, but too active:

Is there no temperate Region can be knowne,
 Betweene their frigid & our torrid Zone;
 Could we not wake from that Lethargick dreame,
 But to be restles in a worse extreame. (84, ll. 151-154)

After this plea for moderation, and a declaration of his fears in the present situation, Denham moves to a symbol of peace and plenty, the River Thames.⁹ The Thames is the source of all blessings, and Denham connects it with the monarchy, though the lines seem to be rather advice than outright compliment to Charles:

As a wise king first settles fruitfulle peace
 In his own Realmes, and with their rich increase
 Seekes warre abroad ... (85, ll. 187-189)

By using the parallel of the balance of forces in nature, and the balance of forces in the kingdom, Denham is able to remind "our angry supercilious Lords", on the hill, not to despise the importance of those in the valley "whose humble fruitefull paine/ Their proud and barren greatness must Sustayne" (87, l. 225 and ll. 227-228).

This passage leads directly to one of the most discussed passages in Cooper's Hill: the stag-hunt. The simile of the stag "(Like a declyning Statesman left forlorne/ To his frinds pittie & pursuers scorne)" (88, ll. 225-226) has suggested that the hunt is an allegory of the trial and death of Strafford. In this early draft, however, the indications are slight, and contradictory. If Denham had intended his audience to recognise the entire episode as an account of Strafford's fate, he would hardly have introduced the hunt thus:

Here have I seene our Charles (when greate affaires
 Give leave to slacken and unbend his Cares)
 Chasing the Royall Stagge, ... (87, ll. 243-245)

nor concluded it with the explicit statement:

This a more Innocent & happie chase,
 Then when of ould (but in the selfe same place)
 Faire Liberty pursu'd & meant a prey
 To Tyrany, here turn'd & stood at Bay. (89, ll. 281-284)

The lines which present the stag as "glad & proud to die" (88, l. 278) at the hand of Charles might, but need not refer to Strafford's expressed willingness to have Charles sign the warrant for his execution. It was a fairly common form of poetical flattery to show hunted animals eager to sacrifice themselves to their masters.¹⁰ Later drafts, however, do establish a firmer connection with Stafford's death, (though never dispelling the ambiguity created by the opening and concluding lines of the episode).

As the political crisis deepened, Denham's alterations to the poem made it less meditative and more openly propagandist. Thus, the original lines on the Londoners' wants increasing as their desires are satisfied (80, ll. 22-24) are changed, in a 1642 draft of the poem, to make a contemporary application not only possible but inevitable. The lines combine reproach and warning, the common tone adopted in royalist propaganda directed at London:¹¹

False to their hopes, affraid to be secure,
 Those mischiefes onely which they make, endure,
 Blinded with light, and sicke of being well,
 In tumults seek their peace, their heaven in hell.

(112-113, ll. 43-46)

In a second draft made in 1642, Denham alters the lines on the stag's death. The image of the sinking ship is dropped, and the idea of the stag glad to die is more fully developed, to provide a closer correspondence with the events surrounding Strafford's death:

As some brave Hero, whom his baser foes
 In troops surround, now these assaile, now those,
 Though prodigall of life, disdaines to die
 By vulgar hands, but if he can descry
 Some Nobler foe's approach, to him he cal's
 And begs his fate, and then contented falls.¹²

(130, ll. 289-294)

It is possible that Denham avoided representing Strafford's death any more explicitly in the two earlier versions, because it was known how deeply the King had been affected by the event and the necessity of permitting it. Thus even an interpretation as comforting as this might be better avoided until time and succeeding events had made the recollection less sharp.¹³ This would be the reaction of a tactful courtier. Even more tactful is Denham's epitaph "On the Earl of Strafford's Tryal and Death,"¹⁴ where Strafford's fate is attributed to the overwhelming might of his enemies: "three kingdoms hate" (153, l. 4). The lines "That we forced him to pittie us whilst he/ Seemed more unmoved and unconcerned then we" (153, ll. 11-12), describing Strafford at his trial, might also be designed to combine praise of his courage with the assurance that he was spared the grief and suffering felt by the King, and his friends. Denham also suggests that Strafford's death set the seal on his greatness, a sentiment appropriate to an epitaph, and also a means to mitigate grief -- and guilt. In such a difficult situation, Denham's epitaph is far more smooth than Cleveland's. It also lacks the latter's force, except in the final couplet, which echoes Cleveland's love and hate theme: "Our nation's glory and our nation's hate."¹⁵

The stag-hunt, in comparison, offers a much slighter treatment of the events surrounding Strafford's death. A more obvious function of this passage in the poem is to provide a smooth transition to the scene

at Runymede, where Magna Carta, the symbol of Englishmen's civil liberty, was signed. The pattern of seeking a mean between two extremes is repeated.¹⁶ For Denham, the law supplies this mean between liberty and authority. Magna Carta provided that kings should not be tyrants, nor their subjects slaves (131, ll. 317-318). Denham suggested qualified approval of the barons' actions in securing their "Faire Liberty" (131, l. 303), and was consistent enough, even on the brink of civil war, to admit, though guardedly, a general application:

For armed subjects can have no pretence
Against their Princes, but their just defence;
And whether then, or no, I leave to them
To justifie, who else themselves condemne.¹⁷

(131, ll. 307-310)

At the time when these lines were published,¹⁸ however, the moderate men in the kingdom thought Charles had made sufficient concessions to guarantee his subjects' liberties. The men led by Pym and Hampden were now the extremists, and many of their former supporters¹⁹ would have accepted the appropriateness of these lines:

And they, whom no denyall can withstand,
Seeme but to aske, while they indeed command.
Thus all to limit Royalty conspire,
While each forgets to limit his desire.

(132, ll. 327-330)

Certainly many of the most devoted royalists agreed with the implication of the following -- that Charles in some measure betrayed his own cause by his weakness: "Till Kings by giving, give themselves away,/ And even that power, that should deny, betray" (132, ll. 323-324).

After this passage of direct political comment, only slightly disguised as history, the disguise of allegory is resumed with the image of a river; not the Thames, but a river now clearly symbolising royal

power, and summarising the propaganda message in the poem. The river benefits the land, when legitimately controlled. Uncontrolled, it brings devastation. But men are now encouraging such disaster by seeking to force the river into too narrow a course. Denham's allegory, and prediction, might have been more accurate had he pointed out that Parliament did not seek merely to dam, or narrow the river, but to channel some of the river's, force in its own direction: to assume for itself prerogative powers formerly exercised by the King. Parliament was so far successful in achieving its aims that when war broke out the King's power was no longer sufficient to overwhelm his opponents. As the quotation above indicates, Denham realised that the King had gone too far in his concessions to Parliament. However, his propagandist purpose in this passage was to persuade Charles' rebellious subjects of the risks they took in opposing their King, and the image he chose corresponded to that purpose rather than the facts.

Denham's concession that both sides have rights, which both sides have tried to exceed, indicates rather a considered judgement than the tactics of a skilful propagandist. Having warned Parliament and people that they are jeopardising their own peace and safety, Denham addresses his final message to both sides:

Therefore their boundlesse power let Princes draw
 Within the Channell, and the shores of Law,
 And may that Law, which teaches kings to sway
 Their Scepters, teach their subjects to obey.

(134, ll. 351-354)

This is his consistent political message. He defends neither the status quo, nor change, for their own sakes, but a more abstract idea of political justice, a balance of interests, protected by the law.

That Denham was not the only cavalier poet with these opinions

is proved by Herrick, whose epigrams echo Denham's thought:

Let Kings and Rulers, learne this line from me;
Where power is weake, unsafe is Majestie. (302)

Preposterous is that Government, (and rude)
 When Kings obey the wilder Multitude. (196)

When Lawes full power have to sway, we see
 Little or no part there of Tyrannie. (213)

Cooper's Hill gives the fullest expression to this philosophy, and the best illustration of how a political message of contemporary significance, if fully thought out and sincerely felt, can be successfully incorporated into poetry which lasts beyond its own age. Denham was not strongly partisan, and yet not without strong convictions. A sense of balance, of the tension of opposing forces, provides the basic theme of the poem, as the landscape suggests the imagery through which it is expressed. Throughout, Denham manipulates both so that the topical implication does not exclude the general, and does not intrude into all levels of meaning.

The great advantage of the heroic couplet, for this kind of verse, was not only that the sense of balance within the form facilitated and enhanced Denham's efforts to balance the two sides in his argument: the couplet form had the advantage over stanzas in that it enabled him to develop each step of his argument, or episode of the allegory, to its natural length, and manage a smooth transition between each. In fact, the couplet combined the virtues of prose, for the writer wishing to present a narrative or an argument, with the advantages of poetry, providing a basic rhythm and the opportunity to give his phrases and his main points the extra, memorable impact of concise, rhymed expression. All poets in this period used the couplet, but few so effectively as Denham,

whom Dryden called one of the "fathers of our English poetry,"²⁰ in setting the standard for heroic verse, which reigned supreme after the Restoration.

As the political crisis deepened, however, Denham ceased to write poetry which dealt with the abstract issues, and turned to more direct forms of propaganda. Though he was sincerely and actively involved on the King's side, he still retained a clear and uncynical insight into political motives and actions. The avoidance of both single-minded partisanship and the total rejection of political principles gave his poetry some advantages over that of both Cleveland and Brome, enabling him to avoid both stridency and triviality.

When Parliament began to exceed its own authority, Denham produced a satirical poem, "To the Five Members of the Honourable House of Commons. The Humble Petition of the Poets" (128), which is squarely on the King's side. The King's attempt, in January 1642, to arrest five M.P.'s on charges of high treason, had provoked a tremendous outcry and brought relations between King and Parliament to their lowest point so far. Denham's poem, however, does not express open enmity but light mockery. The basic theme of his "Petition" is that from time immemorial, poets have been recognised as liars (the common puritan reproach) and that M.P.'s have now unjustly pre-empted this privilege for themselves. This enables him to deal cleverly with the point at issue, the parliamentary privilege of free speech, by deflating this high-sounding claim to mere "poetical licence," since all they say is fiction, and poor fiction at that:

For all those pretty knacks you compose,
Alas what are they but Poems in prose?
And between those and ours there's no difference,
But that yours want the rhyme, the wit and the sense:
But for lying (the most noble part of a Poet)

You have it abundantly, and your selves know it.

(129, 11. 40-45)

In a more serious line, he warns them that their successes are therefore meaningless "... for a Sanctified Cause, must have Sanctified course"

(129, 1. 50) -- a reminder of their own doctrines. Finally, he turns his comparison, and his attack, in another direction: Parliament is making the kingdom poor, which is another attribute of the poet:

If poverty be a part of our Trade,
So far the whole Kingdom Poets you have made,
Nay, even so far as undoing will do it,
You have made King Charles himself a Poet.

(129, 11. 51-54)

One item in the petition stands out as an illustration of how, seven years before the King's execution, such an outcome was so incredible that it could be treated as a joke:

But a trust above all in Poets reposed,
That Kings by them only are made and deposed,
This though you cannot do, yet you are willing;
But when we undertake Deposing or Killing,
They're Tyrants and Monsters, and yet then the Poet
Takes full Revenge on the Villains that do it:
And when we resume a Scepter or a Crown,
We are Modest, and seek not to make it our own.

(129, 11. 31-38)

Even before the Civil War broke out, it was evidently worth throwing out a propagandist hint that kings could not be deposed with impunity; and, for the public at large, that Parliament aimed to usurp, not reform, the exercise of power in the state.

This management of the central imagery of the poem, nearly all the points being made through it, puts Denham in sharp contrast to Cleveland, whose satires are too often a sequence of couplets containing unrelated squibs and slurs. Even when Cleveland provides the framework of a marriage

or a dance, it is merely a setting for ridicule, with no deeper organic relevance to the poem. If Denham has not Cleveland's energy, he compensates for this by greater control of his tone and of his material.

In the following year, a satirical ballad by Denham was printed: "A Speech against Peace at the Close Committee" (122), supposedly an address by Hampden²¹ to a parliamentary group. Destined perhaps for an even wider public, it is not so finely wrought as the "Petition," but nevertheless contains a shrewd analysis of the extremists' position. Hampden is presented exhorting the parliamentary side to fight on, for reasons which a politician might well have given to a small group, if not to the public at large: that their party's aims were still not achieved, than they risked arrest in desisting now (123, st. 2), and that to seek peace would imply the recognition that their cause was wrong (127, st. 15). This is a realistic, and not unduly biassed, appreciation of why Parliament must seek to prolong the war. The cause for which they fight is also stated with minimal distortion:

I would not Monarchy destroy,
But as the only way to enjoy
The ruine of the Church. (122, st. 1)

The bulk of the poem, however, puts the worst possible interpretation on Parliament's motives, acts, and intentions: "In vain this Mischief we have done,/ If we can do no more" (126, st. 13). The references to events in Scotland and Ireland are sufficiently accurate to give sting to this part of the "self"-indictment (123-125). The reference to churches being used for political propaganda was accurate, though naturally exaggerated:

Did I for this take pains to teach
Our zealous Ignorants to Preach,
And did their lungs inspire,
Gave them their Text, set them their Parts,...²²

(125, st. 10)

To this condemnation of Hampden's party through his own mouth, as it were, Denham manages, without stepping out of character, to add an appeal to all non-extremists to oppose a war which is both treasonable and unnecessary:

If men in peace can have their right,
Where is this necessity to fight
And break both law and oath?
Who say that they fight for the cause,
And to defend the King and laws,
But 'tis against them both. (126, ft. 15)

The final stanza is an indirect warning to the Londoners, from whom Parliament drew its main financial support:

Then let us stay and fight, and vote,
Till London is not worth a groat;
Oh, 'tis a patient beast!

Though this is clearly a partisan poem, Denham offers a more thorough study of the opponents' aims and actions than is usual in a political ballad. For propagandist purposes those aims and motives are twisted, but Denham lacks Brome's all-pervading scepticism, which robs the latter's work of dignity and importance.

Denham could not escape the trap of topicality however. He wrote two ballads, describing battles fought in Cornwall in 1643, which have a light, typically cavalier insouciance, less coarse than that of Brome. Unfortunately, they are so full of topical references that most of the humour is incomprehensible for those without knowledge of the original, exaggerated parliamentary reports of the battles. The Western Wonder (130), and The Second Western Wonder (133) are examples of cleverly mocking counter-propaganda, popular enough to be reprinted in Rump nearly twenty years later, but today more interesting to a student of history

than literature.²³

After 1643, it appears that Denham wrote no more openly propagandist poetry: not even an epitaph on the King's death has come down to us. It is just possible that he was unwilling to write in the required hyperbolical terms of a King he did not think faultless. To support this speculation, there is a somewhat ambiguous reference, in his Elegie upon the Death of the Lord Hastings (144), who died in the same year as the king:

But as the Leader of the Herd fell first,
A Sacrifice to quench the raging thirst
Of inflam'd vengeance for past crimes: ...

(145, ll. 27-29)

The whole context makes it certain that this "Leader" is the King, but "past Crimes" is open to several interpretations. In the light of what Denham wrote in his "Elegie on Judge Crooke," The Sophy and Cooper's Hill it is at least possible to interpret the word "crimes" as a reflection on Charles' pre-war policies,²⁴ though Denham makes it clear that he condemns Charles' execution, and those responsible for it.

If it was part of Denham's intention thus to hint at criticism, it may be pointed out that he only does so in poems written before fighting broke out, and after the war was lost. During the war, he was unwaveringly loyal, but consistently avoided extremes, either in panegyric or attack. His exaggerations were rather humorous than bitter. With a more personal concern and individual judgement concerning the political issues than either Brome or Cleveland, Denham wrote at least one poem on those issues which proved of more enduring poetic value than anything by his two contemporaries. The question: was this because he was less partisan, or a better poet? -- is essentially unanswerable, except in terms of compromise:

it was due to both. The second unanswerable question is whether Denham himself would have developed this genre of poetry further, but for the demands of war service and the need for more direct propaganda. Perhaps the course and outcome of the war proved too clearly that there was no natural state of balance between King and people, and that in politics the philosophy of the golden mean is less relevant than the theory "might is right."

Denham's name was generally linked with that of Edmund Waller by the succeeding age, as the two poets were together credited with having introduced the proper use of the heroic couplet. In terms of their political verse, they are linked only by contrast. Waller was regarded as the master of panegyric, particularly in the Restoration period. By that time, he had had plenty of practice, having written panegyrics to the ruling power from James I to Charles II. Flattery which was so impartially offered to both sides can hardly be called political, in intention or effect. It indicates that Waller was more faithful to his métier as panegyrist than to any political principle, except that of "might is right."²⁵

Most of his verse lies outside the war period, which he spent in exile after the discovery, in 1643, of "Waller's Plot" to capture London for the King, and his betrayal of his fellow conspirators. He returned when Cromwell was in power.²⁶

In Charles II reign he was valued, not only because he had improved the use of the heroic couplet, but because he almost totally eschewed the use of striking conceits. Dr. Johnson, in the next century, remarked "The critical decision has given the praise of strength to Denham, and

of sweetness to Waller."²⁷ It is difficult not to equate the poetry and the man: both give the impression of smoothness, and both appear to be lacking in force. The only unapt word in the Earl of Rochester's ironical praise of Waller is "enforce": "He best can turn, enforce, and soften things,/ To praise great conquerors, or to flatter Kings."²⁸

Waller was the only notable poet who changed sides as often as the balladeers. The one consistent note in his panegyrics is the glorification of England, and this patriotic element is the only part of his verse which might be called political propaganda. The flattery might be pleasing to the recipient; the statement that his deeds were bringing greatness to England might influence the people in his favour. On the whole, however, Waller's readiness to praise whoever was in power, his effort to make "All his writings ... free from offence" (Aubrey, 310), bars him from consideration as a political propagandist poet. He does not give the impression that he is hoping to sway the public: and, finally and most importantly, he does give the impression that he would have continued to write his occasional and panegyrical verse, with or without the war. He is one of the very few poets in this survey whose poetry remained essentially unaffected by the revolution taking place. The smooth flow of flattery continues unabated, whether addressed to King or Conqueror.²⁹

Herrick's epigram: "What is't that wasts a Prince? example shoves,/ 'Tis flatterie spends a King, more then his foes" (331), suggests that panegyrics such as Waller's may have played a minor political rôle, in shielding the King from reality -- if Charles needed any encouragement to turn his eyes away from unpleasant facts. One thing seems clear: the

cavalier poets (including Herrick) praised Charles in conformity to a courtly and poetic convention, and their words did not necessarily reflect their personal opinions. Denham stands out as a rare example of a cavalier poet whose interest in and understanding of the political issues was expressed in his poetry, and who also wrote lines in honest criticism of his King.

CHAPTER V

ABRAHAM COWLEY (1618-1667)

Abraham Cowley, like Sir John Denham, was employed in managing the coded correspondence between the King and Queen during the war. There is no record, however, that King Charles I ever asked him to stop writing poetry during this period. It is tempting to speculate whether he might have done so, had Cowley, like Denham, written poetry critical of the King's pre-war policies.¹ Cowley, however, evinced an equal distaste both for politics and for war, in fact and as subjects for poetry. After some early panegyrics and satires in loyal support of the King, he went, in 1644, to serve Queen Henrietta Maria in exile. From this time until his return to England in 1654, he wrote exactly the kind of verse he would have written had no war broken out.

It is easy to deduce his hatred of war from the pre-1644 poems, and in at least one of them there is a hint that, despite panegyric, he did not accept the infallible rightness of all the King's actions. Unfortunately, he chose to intimate this rather more directly in poems written after his return to England during the Protectorate.² In the preface to the 1656 edition of his works, he wrote that after one side had conquered in war, past differences should be forgotten, and resistance should cease. It was the declaration both of a peace-lover, and a pragmatist, a tacit acceptance that "might is right." Charles II's Act of Idemnity and Oblivion (1660) effectively proclaimed the same doctrine of toleration

for the sake of peace, but this evidently did not cover the poet who had proclaimed it too soon, and on the wrong side. The loss of royal favour at the Restoration might seem to have influenced Cowley's jaundiced references to "our late mad and miserable civil wars"³ but his few civil war poems support the truth of his conviction, expressed in the preface to the 1668 edition of his works, that "a warlike, various and a tragical age is the best to write of, but the worst to write in" (7). The inference that he considered his own "war" poetry inferior is sustained when, later in the same preface, he says he has rejected from this edition both his juvenilia and "such pieces as I wrote during the time of the late troubles" (9).

One of his earliest poems in this period stressed his feeling that poets should have nothing to do with war. Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, himself a poet and patron of poets,⁴ joined Charles in his 1639 campaign against Scotland. Cowley declared:

He is too good for War, and ought to be
As far from Danger as from Fear he's free
Those Men alone (and those are useful too)
Whose Valour is the only Art they know,
Were for sad War and bloody Battels born;
Let Them the state Defend, and He Adorn.

(20, ll. 37-42)

Cowley followed this advice for himself, for, as a commonwealth newspaper unkindly noted when he returned to England, he was "more famous by his pen than by his sword."⁵ He did turn his pen, however unwillingly, to verses on the Civil War, but his mind dealt more readily with poetic and philosophical abstractions than political and military realities, and he was ill-at-ease when forced to abandon the classical and conventional themes. Thus he was never to appeal to such a wide audience as Cleveland, Brome

and Denham, and his main efforts were directed at royal panegyric.

Waller's flow of royal panegyric ceased with the war. Perhaps, as a Member of Parliament, he felt it would be unfitting to continue offering praise to the King whose policies he sometimes voted against. He did, however, address a poem to Viscount Falkland,⁶ on the same occasion as Cowley. He too refers to Falkland as a poet, but suggests this rôle combines well with that of a soldier, "Apollo bears as well his bow as harp,"⁷ and that, in the two commanders, Holland and Falkland "We send the Graces and the Muses forth/ To civilise and to instruct the North" (121, ll. 3-4). This charming picture changes to horror as he reflects that Falkland may be killed, and, almost worse, his body may lie with that of the common soldiers:

Among the throng, as cheaply as the rest;
Where oaks and brambles (if the copse be burn'd)
Confounded lie, to the same ashes turn'd.⁸

(122, ll. 18-20)

He turns from this sad prospect of civil war to consider that Charles, having finally taken up arms, as his poets had long urged, would soon turn to foreign wars:

Heaven sends, quoth I, this discord for our good,
To warm, perhaps, but not to waste our blood;
To raise our drooping spirits, grown the scorn
Of our proud neighbours, who ere long shall mourn
(Though now they joy in our expected harms)
We had occasion to resume our arms.⁹

(122, ll. 31-36)

Waller's panegyric is often carried to, or beyond, the verge of the ridiculous, as in the lion simile with which he closes this poem. Cowley, too, was guilty of comparisons and compliments so extravagant as to be ludicrous, and of departing so far from the truth that, like

Waller with "Instructions to a Painter," he invited satire. Cowley's poem, "On the happie Birth of the Duke" refers to the birth of the Duke of Gloucester in 1640, while Charles was preparing his second Scottish campaign. It opens with an almost totally fictitious account of the men, horses and money which the shires of England provided for the campaign. Charles was in fact having great difficulty in obtaining support, for "warre is fear'd" (E. 483, l. 2), as Cowley more truthfully remarks. The bulk of the poem is devoted to the idea that the prince represents a new army on Charles' side: "I see him through an adverse battel thrust,/ Bedecked with noble sweat and comely dust" (E. 484). The awkwardness of the epithets suggests Cowley's unease in dealing with military realities. A later passage is a startling example of the extremes which royal panegyric could reach: the plague was in London, and Cowley, not content with the usual "Scourge of sinne" explanation, adds:

For every life which from great Charles does flow,
And's Female self, weighs down a crowd of low
And vulgar souls: Fate rids of them the earth,
To make more room for a great Princes birth. (E. 484)

The poem was one of a collection presented to Charles by the poets of Cambridge University, and was not printed elsewhere. The image it presents of the King would have been more useful to the parliamentary propagandists than to the royalists, who preferred to show Charles as a loving monarch betrayed by his ungrateful subjects, rather than as a God-like creature to whom their deaths were merely necessary tributes.¹⁰

Cowley wrote a second panegyric to Charles in 1641, when he returned from the second Scottish campaign, bringing peace without victory. Cowley was again able to ignore the political facts, and this time his

relief that whole-scale war had been averted may have lent extra force to the obligatory praise: "Others by War their Conquests gain,/ You like a God your ends obtain" (22, st. 1), changing chaos to order by his word alone. The rest of the poem makes clear, however, that it is only civil war which is to be avoided. Cowley takes up the popular theme, already noted in Waller's poem on Falkland, and urges Charles to win glory as "a new Gustavus" (23, st. 7) in the religious wars on the Continent.

In the prologue to his play The Guardian,¹¹ presented before the young Prince Charles at Cambridge, in 1641, Cowley makes a mock-fearful reference to the Roundheads who were becoming increasingly powerful in London,¹² followed by an expression of scornful indifference:

But our Scene's London now, and by the rout
We perish if the Roundheads be about.
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.
But we contemne the fury of these days,
And scorn as much their Censure as their Praise.

(E. 161, ll. 5-6 and 17-18)

In 1642, a broadside "Satire against Separatists" was published with Cowley's initials, though he never acknowledged this anti-Puritan poem as his.¹³ "The Puritan and the Papist" (E. 149), published in 1643, attributed to "a Scholler in Oxford" and signed A.C., was certainly by Cowley. In that year both he and Cleveland were expelled from Cambridge by the parliamentarians, and joined the King's camp at Oxford. Cleveland, both in his poetry and his actions, was a more vigorous supporter of the King. A comparison of Cowley's satire with "The Rebell Scot" shows that the latter is more vehement and striking, while Cowley exhibits greater control and a more rational approach. Cleveland is making an all out attack

on one target: Cowley attacks two, so that instead of a driving force, a piling-up of insults, he produces a succession of neatly balanced accusations to prove that Puritans are no better than the Papists they hate. Since he has two targets, Cowley is able to exploit the couplet form more cleverly than Cleveland:

They depose Kings by force; by force you'de doe it,
But first use faire meanes to perswade them to it.
They dare kill Kings; now 'twixt ye here's the strife,
That you dare shoot at Kings, to save their life.

(E. 155)

The message is clearly that the kingdom stands in just as much danger from the Puritans as they have claimed it does from Papists.

Sometimes Cowley risks monotony, too great a balance, in seeking to make his point effectively:

They keep the people ignorant, and you
Keepe both the People, and yourselves so too.
They blind obedience and blind duty teach:
You blind rebellion and blind faction preach.

(E. 152),

where the wit of the first couplet is somewhat dulled by the repetitiousness of the second.

Charles' wife and many of his supporters were Roman Catholics, and Cowley was not the only one to realise that many people suspected Charles of being too sympathetic towards that religion, and that the suspicion was doing him harm in the fight against Parliament. Despite the risk of offending the Queen,¹⁴ therefore, it was important that propaganda should be issued from the King's side which clearly abhorred both extremes.¹⁵ The end of the poem concentrates solely on the Puritans, pointing out that the people have more to complain of under the rule of Parliament than

under the King:

The High-Commission you call'd Tyrannie,
 Ye did; Good God! what is the High-Committee?
 Ye said that gifts and bribes Preferments bought,
 By Money and Bloud too, they now are sought.
 To the Kings will the Lawes men strove to draw;
 The Subjects will is now become the Law. (E. 156)

The most remarkable aspect of this passage is that it attacks new transgressions without explicitly denying former ones: as with Brome and Denham, Cowley's basic political belief, emerging even in his propaganda, seems to be not that the King's rule was perfect but that it was better than rule by Parliament, and that civil war was too high a price for reform. Certainly the democratic idea of rule by the people was unacceptable to all royalists -- as the final couplet above indicates.

The simple, colloquial language is in strong contrast to Cleveland, who might employ familiar expressions but never approached the almost conversational tone which Cowley adopts here. But though Cowley's satire is more comprehensible, it does not have the sustained, attacking vigour which made Cleveland so admired and feared. Cleveland urged his "keen Iambicks" to "bite till your teeth do meet"¹⁶ and many of his hits must have drawn blood, where Cowley's wit could only bruise.

The satire ends on a more defeatist note than is found in Cleveland at this date:

We thanke ye for the ill's receiv'd, and all
 Which by your diligence in good time we shall.
 We thank ye, and our gratitude's as great
 As yours, when you thank'd God for being beat. (E. 157)

Cowley, not lacking in wit, yet evidently lacked either Cleveland's conviction or his combative spirit, and apparently ceased writing for the cause when he saw it as lost beyond his powers of panegyric redemption.

As he writes in the preface to the 1668 edition of his works: "I have cast away three Books of the Civil War it self, reaching as far as the first Battel of Newbury [1643], where the succeeding misfortunes of the party stopt the work" (E. 9). This work was finally published in 1679, with the title, "A Poem on the Late Civil War" (E. 465), and offers, so far as it goes, a clear summary of Cowley's reactions to the war, both as a man and a poet.

He begins by lamenting the "Rage [that] does England from it self divide" (E. 467), in contrast to the glorious victories over foreign lands, won by earlier sovereigns, and the peace enjoyed under the Stuarts. The propaganda for peace is clearly linked to the royalist side: "Have you forgot those happy years of late,/ That saw nought ill, but us that were ingrate" (E. 469). Scotland first broke the calm. From there came the Stuart kings, but "... soon the North her kindness did Repent,/ First the Peace-Maker, and next war she sent" (E. 469).¹⁷ Cowley's account of Charles' second Scottish campaign is rather more accurate here than in the panegyric "On his Majesties Return" (E. 22). The campaign had ended with Charles virtually bribing the Scots not to attack, which Cowley now records thus:

For Jove, who might have us'd his thundring power,
Chose to fall calmly in a Golden showre!
A way we found to conquer, which by none
Of all our thrifty Ancestors was known. (E. 469)

The metaphor inevitably recalls Cleveland's in Rupertismus¹⁸ and the comparison is all in the latter's favour. In Cleveland it is an extravagant flight of imagination: Cowley is merely straining to find a flattering poetic shield for the unacceptable facts. When, like Cleveland, he wishes to deal with the invulnerability of his hero, he strives for simplicity

but comes close to childishness:

More than he them, the Bullets feared his Head,
And at his Feet lay innocently Dead.
They knew not what those Men that sent them meant
And acted their pretence, not their intent.¹⁹

(E. 473)

Cowley and Cleveland were both reproached, by the succeeding age, for the extravagance and inappropriateness of their metaphysical wit. On the evidence of his war-time poetry alone, Cowley deserves the "metaphysical" reproach only because his talent was more suited to abstract philosophical themes and expression, and this blended ill with poetry on the practical realities of war. The metaphors he seeks are too often not vivid, though far-fetched, but awkward and even bathetic. There is a further example when Cowley deals with the outbreak of the war, blamed solely on the "Churches" -- evidently the Presbyterians and Puritans -- who sought reform:

The Churches first this Murderous Doctrine sow,
And learn to kill as well as bury now.
The Marble Tombs where our Fore-fathers lie,
Sweated with dread of too much company:
And all their sleeping Ashes shook for fear. (E. 470)

The first couplet is forceful enough: but the succeeding lines offer evidence for the view that Cowley chose to suppress his war-time poetry as much for the sake of his own reputation as a poet as for the sake of peace and toleration.

Cowley the panegyrist is more prominent in this poem than Cowley the satirist. Though the King is "a large Prisoner in all England made", he has divine protection and cannot lose the war:

Had Men forsook him, Angels from above
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.
Would all have mustered in his Righteous Aid,

And Thunder against your cannon would have play'd.

(E. 471)

When the battle proper begins,²⁰ Cowley is happy to people the battlefield with abstractions -- Loyalty, Sedition, Ignorance, Mercy (E. 472-473).

He even presents himself on the field, in abstract guise, for he was almost alone, among the prominent cavalier poets around the King, in never having any military duties. This is his explanation:

Here Learning and th'Arts met, as much they fear'd
As when the Hunns of old, and Goths appear'd.
What should they do, unapt themselves to fight,
They promised noble Pens the Acts to write.²¹

(E. 473)

The lines are unmistakably given in his own behalf, a recognition that he is "unapt" to fight. Unfortunately, his pen was equally "unapt" for the rôle. In the latter part of the poem, Cowley turns to personal attack on the King's enemies, which combines awkwardly with what has gone before. Of the poets who wrote for one side or the other during the war, Cowley, though not the least good, was almost certainly the least enthusiastic. Of the gaiety both Brome and Denham could display he has none, and he appears to have none of Denham's genuine concern with constitutional issues. He lacks, too, Cleveland's zest for combat, verbal or otherwise.

A precocious scholar and poet, a lover of the classics, he might have been content to employ his pen on conventional panegyrics on the King's victories. A series of defeats made even this impossible, and Cowley, who could not be "a Poet in despite of Fortune" (8) abandoned both the scene and theme of war.²²

Cowley's reaction as a poet to the Civil War is made clearer by contrast with another contemporary poet, William Cartwright, who, before

his death in 1643, had shown signs of being able to adapt the panegyric successfully to the circumstances of war. An ex-student and now Anglican preacher at Oxford, he was unlike Cowley in joining enthusiastically in the defence of that city,²³ when Charles settled his war-time headquarters there. Unfortunately, one year after the outbreak of war, Cartwright died of "camp-fever" at Oxford, so that, as with Suckling, it is only possible to speculate as to how far his poetry would have been influenced by the war.

Cartwright had the advantage over Cowley in being rather more willing to face a combat for his beliefs. This is clear from his poem "A New-Years-gift to a Noble Lord. 1640" (533), a spirited defence of the Anglican Church:

Pray'rs are Our Arms; and the time affords
 On a Good Day be said Good Words;
 Could I shape Things to Votes, I'd wish a Calm,
 Sovereign and soft, as Flouds of Balm;
 But as it is, I square
 The Vote to the Affair,
 And wish this Storm may shake the Vine,
 Only to make it faster twine;

(534, ll. 51-58)

Cartwright's early panegyrics, after Charles had first taken up arms against his subjects, followed the fashion of ignoring these events. In that written on the marriage of the Princess Mary to the Duke of Orange, in 1641, he dismisses the "sowre Iustle" of state affairs in the first three lines (539), a wiser technique than that adopted by most poets, including Cowley, who attempted to force unpleasant facts into a flattering mould. The rest of the poem shows Cartwright less over-awed by his subject than other panegyrists, and not suppressing the liveliness of his wit, particularly in the final couplet: "Wee from Long Loves at last to Hymen

tend/ But Princes Fires beginne, where Subjects end" (541).

A year later the Civil War proper began, and in 1643, the Queen's ship was fired on by parliamentary forces as she returned to England. This time Cartwright's panegyric does not ignore, but triumphantly incorporates the disturbing circumstances surrounding "The Queen's Return from the Low Countries." Parliament had recently impeached the Queen of high treason, and Cartwright uses this fact to produce one stanza of exquisite beauty:

Courage was cast about Her like a Dresse
Of solemne Comelinesse;
A gather'd Mind, and an untroubled Face
Did give Her dangers grace.
Thus arm'd with Innocence, secure they move,
Whose Highest Treason is but Highest Love.

(554, ll. 13-18)

-- thus demonstrating that panegyric can become memorable when it faces, instead of dismissing or disguising a real situation, however unconventional that situation may be for royalty. The attack on "Her enemies" (554, st. 5) is used to heighten praise by contrast (555, st. 6).

Other panegyrists were soon discouraged by the difficulties of praising a King who was fighting to retain his crown. The distance between their flattery and the facts became too great, and the total irrelevance of their work too obvious. Cartwright, genuinely moved by the Queen's courage, showed how these difficulties might be exploited to striking effect. His praise of the Queen is related to her actual situation, which is further related to an attack on the King's opponents. The poem gains much of its effectiveness from Cartwright's success in combining these disparate strands.

By contrast, Cowley's more conventional treatment of the Queen's reunion with Charles gives the impression of empty compliment, of praise

unsustained by reference to fact. Even the "facts" of the battlefield on which they meet are not used for contrast, but waved away by cupids and perfumes (E. 479).

In this same year, Cartwright wrote another poem combining praise of the royal family with attack on their opponents. This poem was printed as a broadside, and the linking of invective and eulogy is achieved by nothing more subtle than the device suggested in the title: "November or, Signal Dayes Observ'd in that Month in relation to the Crown and Royal Family" (560). By this means, Cartwright can combine praise of monarchs, past and present, with aspersions on their enemies, past and present. The poem is in distichs, though divided into stanzas for each date, which gives Cartwright the opportunity to sum up his points in a series of striking final couplets. The most effective stanza is perhaps that on November 5th, where the double attack is reminiscent of Cowley's "The Puritan and the Papist." The balance of the couplet is exploited with equal skill, and the final line has more force than Cowley was capable of:

5. Day, Our Delivery from the Papists Conspiracy.	Next view a Treason of the worst Intent, Had not our Owne <u>done</u> more, then Strangers <u>meant</u> ; Religion is the Thing both sides pretend, But either to a different End: They, out of Zeale, labour to reare their owne, These, out of Zeale to pull All downe. Blesse Us from These, as Them! but yet compare Those in the Vault, These in the chayre. Though the just Lot of unsuccessful sin Fix their's Without, you'l finde Worse Heads within.
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(561, ll. 31-40)

Had Cartwright lived longer, the growing tide of defeat might have led him, like Cowley, to abandon all reference to the war in poetry. On the evidence of these two 1643 poems, however, it seems Charles was justified when, as Aubrey reports, he "dropt a teare at the newes of his

death" (54), for Cartwright gave signs of being one of the King's most effective supporters, with both pen and sword.

Both the number and the unqualified nature of the commendatory verses published with the 1651 edition of Cartwright's works attest his pre-eminence among contemporary poets. In the opinion of his editor, Evans, his popularity was at least partly due to his being the perfect champion of King and Church (47). The succeeding age disparaged him, as they did Cleveland and Cowley, because of his metaphysical wit.

Cowley, however, was not so completely ignored as his two contemporaries, in the Restoration period, but his reputation in the reigns of Charles I and II was not due to any poetry inspired by the war, but to that based on classical genres and themes.²⁴ His scholarly preference for these models from the past and for smooth metaphysical wit, and his distaste, though not total incapacity for adapting his style to the demands of war propaganda, are two sides of the same coin. Cowley declared that, if he had not fulfilled his youthful promise, it was "not so much by my own negligence and ill-husbandry, as by some notorious accidents and public disasters" (9). The war forced him to deal with uncongenial themes and gave him little time to write the kind of poetry he preferred, but ultimately, it appears that interest in his poetry has declined since the eighteenth century because he preferred to turn to the past, not present realities, and drew his inspiration rather from books than the life around him. He finally longed "to bury myself ... in some obscure retreat" (8) and for later ages, much of his poetry²⁵ seems to belong in some backwater of English verse, looking to traditions which -- perhaps because of the cataclysm of war -- never developed to join the main stream.

CHAPTER III

ALEXANDER BROME (1620-1666)

As Cleveland was the most famous satirist, so Brome was the most popular balladeer on the royalist side. Like Cleveland, he was unswervingly loyal, but never so violently partisan. The preface to his collected poems (1661) gives an amusing resumé of the excuses of gentlemen-poets for allowing their works to be published; followed by a rejection of these excuses for himself:

These reasons being laid aside, as deficient, it will be expected that I should present you with better; but, indeed, I have them not about me; For why I made these rambles, I can give no other account than a poor man does why he gets children; that is his pleasure, and this mine. And as with him in his case, it is with me in mine; having brought our brats into the world, it is our duty to provide for their preservation.¹

This attitude of careless detachment, mixed with coarseness, characterises much of Brome's political verse. There is a basic scepticism, and a certain audacious honesty, which argues against success as a propagandist. But Brome demonstrates an ability to calculate effects which turns a possible defect into an advantage.

Aubrey declares that at Cambridge, Cleveland "was more taken notice of for his being an eminent Disputant, then a good Poet,"² and his satires seem to demonstrate a rhetorician's desire to impress or dazzle his audience. Brome was a lawyer, a profession in which the aim is to persuade and convince. It may be that their training had some influence on the type of poetry they wrote. Certainly Brome's verse is at once less striking and more likely to persuade than Cleveland's satires.

Wither was thus "a man with a message" and that message was primarily religious. When the Civil War broke out, however, Wither believed that Parliament represented the force which might reform the whole kingdom. Until then a loyal, if critical subject of Charles (he joined in his first campaign against the Scots), Wither now turned his pen and sword to the defence of Parliament.

The fact that his motive was primarily religious does not, in the circumstances of the Civil War, disqualify Wither from being considered as a political poet. The fact which does make him unique, among such poets, is that only the content of his work changed during the war. His style and his purpose underwent no alteration. He had been writing poems designed to influence a wide audience for almost twenty years, and had long ago renounced the use of poetic diction, imagery and flourishes of wit in favour of language as plain as he could make it. His poetry, however, became not plain, but flat. It was long-winded, repetitious and involved, a strange mixture of personal complaint and religious exhortation, and the addition of political argument merely increased the confusion.

His first long poem of the war was Campo Musae (1643) which he dedicated to "His EXCELLENCE the Earle of ESSEX, Lord Generall of the Army raised for the defence of the KING, Parliament and Kingdom."⁵ The dedication raises a problem which Wither is unable to resolve throughout the poem, namely how to fight for Parliament without being against the King. His arguments for this essentially untenable position represent those commonly put forward at the time by men who disapproved of the King's government, but were shaken to find themselves in opposition to their legal and hereditary sovereign.

The most obvious and superficial justification was of course that it was not the King, but his advisors, whom they opposed: "Nor of our Soveraigne, censure we amisse:/ But them we rightly judge, that him misguide."⁶ The King's proclamations unequivocally condemned Parliament and its supporters. How do we know, asks Wither, that these proclamations are really issued by the King?⁷

Wither takes the doctrine "The King can do no wrong" and surrounds it with so many qualifications that its political import is left in total confusion:

The King, as King, can do no wrong; because
He can do nothing but what he may do
According to divine and humane Lawes;⁸

Should he break those laws, the subjects are freed from their allegiance. In order to justify rebellion against the sovereign, Wither is obliged to prove that he rules neither by hereditary right, nor right of conquest, and certainly not by jus divinus, but by popular consent: "The People, did first make both Lawes and Kings,/ And, for their own securitie did make them" (46).⁹ The King, misled by his counsellors, has become a tyrant, thus clearly breaking the terms of his contract with the people. The parliamentary armies are merely fighting to protect the "Commonweale," and hence the King, for "... her destruction will his ruine bring" (32). The task is one in which all loyal subjects should help: "On paine of ruine, Come, and helpe to bring/ Our Sov'raigne home: And so, God save the King" (68). The case is all the more urgent since Charles and hence the whole kingdom are in danger from "the Romish-Whore", and "a Popish Armie" (66-67), against which all true Protestants should unite. The fear of Catholicism inspires one of Wither's rare "purple passages":

And, when I saw the Devils, who inspire
 This wilfulnesse into him, ceaze the goods
 Of his best subjects; their faire houses fire;
 Deflowre their Virgins; shed their Old-mens bloods;
 Betray their nearest Kinsmen, slay their Brothers;
 Deprive the blamelesse Infants of their lives;
 Enslave their Fathers, kill their frighted Mothers:
 Abuse their Daughters, and defile their Wives:

It griev'd me, that this Iland should afford
 One man, who for this Quarrell drew no sword.
 But, since I have consider'd, that, from ROME
 These Plagues, these mischiefes, these unhappy warres,
 And all, our present miseries, did come, ... (63)

These same points recur throughout the poem, as does the most paradoxical of all, that King and Parliament are one and the same, so that it cannot be treason to support the latter:

When therefore that great COUNSEL call'd for aid
 (With whom the King-ship alwayes doth reside,
 In whose Commands, the Kings are best obey'd,
 From whom, the King cannot himself divide)
 To serve the King and Parliament I came
 So loyally, that, if it Treason be,
 I will not ask a pardon for the same.¹⁰ (8)

Thirteen months later, Wither wrote Vox Pacifica,¹¹ dedicated to King and Parliament, but now containing a sterner warning to the former. Parliament is "th'essentiall Government," a body which can still operate without Charles:

A King, is but a substituted-head,
 Made for conveniencie: And, if thereby
 The body seem to be indangered,
 (If power it hath) it hath Authoritie
 To take one off, and set another on;
 Aswell as, at the first, to make it one. (138)

He faces the possibility of the King's death in this war, with arguments that reveal the pertinence of Brome's "clean contrary way":

Thou know'st, O GOD! that we have no desire,
 To take from Him, or His, the Royall Throne,
 Or, pull it lower; but, to raise it higher,
 And, set him, rather, faster thereupon.

.
 If, by his wilfulnesse, that bloud be spilt,
 Which we would save; of them require it, LORD!
 Who make him to be Patron of their guilt;
 Or, bring him within danger of the Sword:
 And, keep us, and our children, ever cleare,
 From all the bloud, that shall be spoyled, here.

(149)

Passages in defence of the Scottish alliance show that royalist propagandists were touching a responsive chord when they attacked the Scot:

... who would have beleev'd (having heard
 The scandals and malignant jealousies,
 Wherewith some do their love, yet, mis-reward)
 That Scotland should for Englands aid arise

(38)

Had they been trustlesse; or, had aim'd at ends,
 As base as many of your own have had;
 Your foe, e'ere this, had done what he intends:
 And you and yours, perhaps, had slaves been made.

(56)

As the first quotation shows, in 1645 Parliament was no longer primarily concerned with rallying support, but with uniting its supporters. This was a more difficult task on the parliamentary than on the royalist side, a fact which the latter realised, and tried to exploit in their propaganda.

The second quotation indicates that Wither is now resuming his favourite theme, the universal sinfulness of his country-men. If Charles is a tyrant, it is not only due to the servile flattery of his courtiers, but "The peoples blockishnesse, and baseness" which taught their rulers "how to be Oppressors" (27). Wither now realises that Parliament is not the redeeming force he had believed:

Your House of Commons, (though when first convented,
 It fill'd you with a hopeful expectation)
 Hath ev'ry way so truly represented,
 The Common Constitution of this Nation, (28)

.

... what can by a Parliament be done,
When all are with corruption over-growne? (29)

Unless the people are careful to elect only honourable men, they will find they have exchanged one tyrant for "many a score" (135). He chides them, too, with their lack of faith:

So, those great Marvailles you still over-passe,
Which GOD hath wrought, to perfect your release:
So, when by some new Streight, your faith he tries,
You wish that in your Bondage, you had staid.
(43)

God has saved them, not only from political oppression, but from "the Sorceries of Rome" (43), only to see the people run into danger from "Schismes, Sects, and Fancies" formented by "some Priestlings, who as guiltie are/ Of your Divisions, as the Prelates-train" (61). On the religious question, Wither favours tolerance, urging men to recognise that the Anglican Church may not be wholly in error, and that the Presbyterians and Independents may not be wholly right.¹² The State should compel no man to observe forms of worship against his conscience: "So, in the Church, true comlinesse, may be,/ And Vnion, without uniformitie." (131).

The "Vox Pacifica" is trying to end dissensions on the parliamentary side but the main message is that God will only grant peace when both sides unite in repentance:

Yea, bid both King, and Parliament, make hast,
In penitence, united, to appeare:
Lest, into those Confusions, they be cast,
Which will affright them both; and, make them feare,
And, know, there is, on earth, a greater-thing,
Then, an unrighteous Parliament, or King. (199)

Though he remained faithful to the parliamentary cause in all his war-time tracts, whether in verse or prose, Wither was even more faithful

to his rôle as Jonah, foretelling doom for the sins of both sides. He became progressively more critical of the King, and continued to deplore the rise of factions within Parliament.¹³ He still believed, however, that the salvation of England was more possible under their rule than the King's -- so long as men would reform their hearts and minds.

Wither was probably the most prolific of all propagandists on the parliamentary side. Unfortunately, while he sought to use straightforward language:¹⁴ "souldier-like blunt complements I use,/ That I may draw those fools to give attention,/ Who will not els perhaps regard my Muse," he forgot that this alone would not ensure that he was read, and continued to pour out his message at interminable length, with little sense of proportion or balance, and no attempt at striking impact.¹⁵ The sluggish, or capricious, flow of thought obliterates any possibility of poetic organisation, and the couplets which punctuate his verse rarely sum up or conclude what has gone before. One such couplet, after fifty-seven pages of involved and circuitous argument, is enough to cast his most patient reader into despair: "And to that end, to what I said before/ In our defence, I'll add a little more."¹⁶ One argument, forcefully presented, has far more chance of convincing the reader than a mass of arguments, some contradictory, some logically unnecessary, which can only obscure the issue. Even Wither seemed to be aware that some excuse was needed for the confusion of his thought:

Destructive times, distractive muzings yeeld,
Expect not therefore method now of me.
But such as fits Minerva in the Field. (3)

Even the exigencies of war cannot excuse all Wither's faults, since they characterize everything he wrote between 1628 and his death.

The real cause lay in his vision of himself as a writer with both divine inspiration and a divine mission, a prophet and a preacher. He was always aware of his great facility in writing verse¹⁷ and as he came to believe that he was fulfilling a duty which God had placed upon him, he argued that to blot, or cut, a line might frustrate that purpose. He is both unwilling and unable to restrain his Muse, which continues to provide a gloomy bass-note in the background of all events from 1628 to 1666. In Wither's own words "My Spirit groaneth forth this mournfull Ode."¹⁸ He complains of the ills suffered by himself as well as the country, sometimes at such length that he finds it a motive for reproach, though he never reforms:

Here, whether you be pleas'd, or no,
This Author, maketh bold to show
Those Portions of his Private wrongs,
Whose knowledge, and redresse, belongs
To Publike Justice; that, her eye
May through his wounds, her owne espie.
The VOICE, then speakes againe, and schooles,
In Him, all other froward-Fooles,
Who, with impatiencie, do vent
Their private wrongs, or discontent:
As if their Trifles could be heard,
When Kingdomes cannot find regard.¹⁹

Rather than ascribe his declining popularity to the tediousness of his verse, Wither preferred to see himself as a neglected and despised prophet:

Then shall the age to come, pick up, and gather
Those droppings of my Pen, which now they scorne;
And, wonder, men esteemed them no rather;
And pittie those afflictions I have borne.
Then, they shall scan each page, and ev'rie Line,
And, finde rak'd up, among my Vanities,
Expressions, which will show, that Sparks divine
Of Heav'nly-Fire, in earthly Cinders lies.
Then, they shall come to understand and know,
That many future things I did behold.²⁰

Wither's basic view of himself as poet and prophet is expressed in these lines from Vox Pacifica, urging his readers not to believe that:

... for Saints, to use
 The Muses language, some way doth abuse
 Their Sanctitie: Or, that this way of Preaching,
 Is Heath'nish, and a Pagan-straine of teaching.
 For, though most Poets were, long time ago,
 (And yet are) Priests of Lust, and Drunkennesse,
 They, from their first beginning, were not so;
 But, men inspir'd divinely, to expresse
 The will of GOD; and, by their holy Songs,
 To rouze up that affection in the heart,
 Which to the Love of Pietie belongs;
 And, to encline it to the better-part.
 At this our Author aimes;

.
 Permit not then, the rigidnesse of those,
 Who think Divinitie confin'd to prose;
 And, Verse ordain'd, at first, for nothing els
 But, carnall fancies, foolish charms, and spels:

 Your judgements to pervert,²¹

As Allan Pritchard remarks in his article on "George Wither: The Poet as Prophet,"²² "He lacked the sensibility to recognise, as his great contemporary recognised, that prose is a more suitable medium than verse for religious and political polemics."

Wither's "great contemporary" was, of course, John Milton. As a poet on the parliamentary side, he can be compared with Wither on only two points. Both saw the poet as divinely inspired, with a mission to instruct, as well as delight. This led both of them to criticise their own side, as well as the King's, when they felt that God's will was not being served -- though each had his own interpretation of God's will. Unlike Wither, however, Milton did not believe that the poet need do nothing but write as the spirit prompted him. His political poems are closely and carefully constructed, and very short.

Milton selected an unusual form, the sonnet. The choice is

In the sonnet addressed to General Fairfax after his victories in the second Civil War, Milton again criticises those nominally of his own side, besides attacking the enemy. In this sonnet no person or party is named, save Fairfax himself, and particular acts are described in abstract terms. The poem gains in dignity what it loses in immediacy. Readers who know nothing of Parliament's dishonest means of raising and spending public money can still appreciate the weighty indictment in the closing lines:

For what can Warrs but endless warr still breed,
Till Truth, and Right from Violence be freed,
And Public Faith²⁷ cleared from the shamefull brand
Of Public Fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed
While Avarice, and Rapine share the land.

Milton consciously avoided pointed topical references, regarding them as more appropriate to polemical prose. Yet the poem had a distinct political message for those of his contemporaries who shared his hope that, once the Royalists and the Scots were suppressed, Fairfax would use his prestige, if not his army, to reform the corrupted Parliament. The two sonnets fittingly represent Milton's concern with religious and civil liberty, which he consistently held above mere party allegiance.

The poems illustrate the dilemma of the parliamentary propagandists, in that Milton is criticising his own side. The royalists knew what they were defending, but the parliamentary side were fighting for ideas of civil and religious liberty which had never yet been put into effect, and they were divided amongst themselves as to the form and scope of the freedom they desired. They were not even united in wishing to depose the King, and so were hampered both in defence and attack.²⁸ Milton judged rightly, therefore, in confining the greater part of his controversial political writing to prose, which could more fittingly embrace a wider field and

variety of closely-reasoned arguments.

Despite his reservations over the religious and political policies of Parliament, Milton served the anti-Royalist side throughout the Interregnum, both as pamphleteer and as Secretary for Foreign Tongues. In this he differed from Marvell, who spent most of the war years abroad, and later wrote: "Whether it be a war of religion or liberty, I think the cause was too good to have been fought for. Men ought to have trusted God -- they might and ought have trusted the King with the whole matter."²⁹ Marvell does not deny that reforms were needed, but believed that their achievement was better left to time than forced by war. Perhaps he believed that Charles would have been moved by divine intervention to change his ecclesiastical policy and to govern through Parliament rather than by the exercise of his prerogative powers. Whatever this implies of Marvell's political judgement, it says much for his love of peace.

He wrote commendatory verses for the 1649 edition of Lovelace's poems, which has sometimes been taken as an indication that he was a royalist at this date. The poem, however, is more concerned with how the war destroyed, not the Court, but cultured life in general, and the art of writing in particular:

Our times are much degenerate from those
Which your sweet Muse, which your fair Fortune chose,
.....
Our Civill Wars have lost the Civicke Crown.³⁰

Men now turn their wits to attack rather than praise, and the division in the kingdom allows every meagre talent to criticise the greater writers, or the "barbed Censurers" (212, l. 21) to prohibit their works solely because of the writers' political or religious allegiance: "You shall for being faultless be accus'd" (212, l. 26), or "Because you write when

going to the Warre," (213, l. 30) or "... because Kent/ Their first Petition by the Author sent" (213, ll. 31-32).

This is the clear vision of a man standing neutral and observing how partisan politics are destroying the literary culture he had known. Both Marvell and Brome begin their tributes to Lovelace by speaking of the degenerate or "verseless times"³¹ in which he wrote. But only Marvell expands this introduction into a survey of how politics affects the poet, while Brome obliquely blames the parliamentary side for having created "these more barbarous dayes."³² Both Brome and Marvell end their poems by stressing Lovelace's popularity among the "beauteous ladies" (213, l.33) who sallied forth in his defence. The lines "O no, mistake not, I reply'd, for I/ In your defence, or in his cause would dy" (213, l. 45-46), possibly of an intentional ambiguity, refer in this context to the cause of the poet and poetry, not the cause of the King. The fact that Marvell was not known as a royalist would account for the lady's mistake in numbering him among Lovelace's critics: "Thinking that I too of the rout had been" (213, l.42).

This tribute to Lovelace is an a-political poem, taking a stand against partisanship in poetry. Marvell's elegy "Upon the death of the Lord Hastings" (213) may be compared to Denham's poem on the same subject, to show that once again Marvell avoids any hint of royalist propaganda. The lines "Therefore the Democratick Stars did rise/ And all that Worth from hence did Ostracize" (214, ll. 25-26) are subtly ambiguous, since the jealous state which causes Hastings' banishment from earth is Heaven, where he now dwells. Nevertheless, the reader may infer that Marvell regrets a democracy where surpassing worth is envied and ostracized.

Either because of or in spite of the fact that he hated the

struggle of parties, Marvell produced the greatest political ode of the period, "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwel's Return from Ireland" (55). Although it was written one year after the end of war, it must be included here as a contrast to the poems of party politics. Neither blindly partisan nor propagandist, the ode³³ is a measured, carefully thought out and sincere statement of the case for Cromwell. It recognises that sheer necessity, in political situations, may not always be the same as abstract justice: in blunter terms, that de facto power takes precedence over power held de jure or by tradition:

Though Justice against Fate complain,
And plead the antient Rights in vain:
But those do hold or break
As men are strong or weak (56, ll. 37-40)

and "industrious Valour" can "ruine the great work of Time" (56, ll. 33-34). Marvell criticises neither side: if a republic has succeeded a monarchy, then "'Tis Madness to resist or blame/ The force of angry Heavens flame" (56, ll. 25-26). Both sides in the war claimed to see the workings of Providence in victories and in defeats. Marvell takes this common-place and uses it to strengthen his non-partisan argument. One must submit without recrimination, as Charles is shown to do: "Nor call'd the Gods with vulgar spight/ To vindicate his helpless Right" (57, ll. 61-62) against the "forced Pow'r" (57, l. 66) which replaced his own.

As many critics have noted, Marvell's portrayal of Charles at his execution is wholly sympathetic: yet Marvell also states his admiration for Cromwell. If the latter is favoured by Providence, it is because he deserves it: "... if we would speak true,/ Much to the Man is due" (56, ll. 27-28). Cromwell was strong where Charles was weak, not only as a

soldier, or politician, but even intellectually (56, ll. 47-52). Cromwell was just to former enemies:

They can affirm his Praises best,
And have, though overcome, confest
How good he is, how just,
And fit for highest Trust.³⁴

(57, ll. 77-80)

and did not seek to seize all power for himself:

Nor yet grown stiffer with command
But still in the Republick's hand:
How fit he is to sway
That can so well obey. (57, ll. 81-84)

The personal qualities, not the political beliefs of Cromwell are examined, and he is pronounced worthy to replace "the Royal Actor" (56, l. 53), for he is a man "That does both act and know" (57, l. 76), "act" changing its connotation to imply decisive energy rather than simple representation. Thus Marvell (in a rather gruesome simile) can declare that Charles' execution foretells a "happy Fate" (57, l. 72) for England.

The fundamental theme of the ode is that right is no match for might, and that this must be accepted when the peace and stability of the kingdom are at stake. We are free to infer, however, that ideally the two should be combined, for when power is gained by might -- even assisted by Providence -- it can only be retained by the same means:

Still keep thy Sword erect:
Besides the force it has to fright
The Spirits of the shady Night;
The same Arts that did gain
A Pow'r must it maintain. (58, ll. 116-120)

Marvell does not dismiss the arguments on the royal side, but shows how these must give way before a superior force which promises both peace and justice at home, and greatness abroad (58, ll. 97-106). He

accepts and incorporates the contradictions and tensions inseparable from this broader point of view, which most of the political poets suppressed or were unable to comprehend. The ode thus has an enduring interest as a personal rather than a "party-coloured" work. It is almost unique in the poetry of the period in its personal, rather than partisan comprehension of both personalities and issues. Marvell offers praise to Charles but withholds support. He accepts the new order without condemning the old. A poem so full of political analysis can hardly be called non-political. It can, despite the dedication, be called non-partisan.

The war was ended, and this tribute to the victor marks the highest point which the poetry inspired by it could reach.

CHAPTER VII

THE PROGRESS OF POLITICAL POETRY

Each of the foregoing chapters dealt principally with a poet who wrote a significant amount of verse with political inspiration and purpose during the Civil War, and who achieved contemporary fame at least in part because of that verse. Today, however, this group of poets is over-shadowed by the second group, of those who wrote comparatively little political poetry. Ironically enough, it is the latter who are more readily identified by modern readers as Cavaliers or Puritans. Lovelace, Suckling, Cartwright, Herrick, Marvell and Milton are the chief examples in this category. The consensus of opinion today is that this group possessed greater poetic talent than the former, and that though puritan poets were themselves in a minority, they number amongst them the two greatest poets of the age.

There is no simple answer to the questions thus raised: does politics as a subject automatically have a bad effect on poets and poetry, and was the puritan spirit more apt to produce great poetry than the cavalier?

In view of Denham's Cooper's Hill, Milton's sonnets, and Marvell's "Ode," it is clear that political poetry cannot be dismissed as an inferior genre per se, and yet, since so little political poetry from this age is still read, there must be some disadvantages attending on politics as a subject for verse.

The most obvious handicaps for the civil war poets were pointed out in the first chapter: they were dealing with an almost completely new

genre, with no existing standards or conventions, and for all the poets except Wither, this was also the first time they had cause to write for the general public, which also meant an adaptation in style. Moreover, these changes had to be made under the pressure of a war in which the country was divided and undergoing one of the deepest revolutions in her history. Inescapably, the poets too were at war.

Each of the major political poets reacted differently. Among the Cavaliers, Cleveland turned to satires which became increasingly savage, and Brome to ballads that became increasingly cynical. Both poets became famous as they might never have done had they remained among the host of poets writing in styles and genres already established. But both tied their work so closely to contemporary events and personalities, to temporary passions and purposes, that their fame proved ephemeral. With Cooper's Hill, Denham succeeded in writing a poem which, though of contemporary political significance, held interest on different levels, thanks to the careful use of allegory which did not involve a one-to-one correspondence with the current political situation. A century later, the political aspect could be overlooked and its value as a descriptive, historical and meditative poem stressed. While approaching war gave Denham the motive for writing Cooper's Hill, the pressure of events during the war led him to abandon serious political poetry in favour of entertaining propagandist ballads, more skilfully composed than those of Brome, but essentially occasional poems, of little interest when the circumstances that gave rise to them were forgotten. Cowley was the most reluctant of the major political poets, and only "The Puritan and the Papist" shows any signs of a successful adaptation to the poetry of

propaganda, while Wither made no adaptations at all.

The more famous cavalier poets might more fittingly be called Caroline poets, since the poetry on which their fame rests was written in the styles favoured in the Court of Charles I before, with the approach of war, his supporters came to be known as Cavaliers. Suckling and Cartwright died too early for us to judge how their poetry might have developed.¹ Herrick, like them greatly influenced by Jonson, wrote epigrams which tersely summed up the points at issue, but these were the private comments of a man removed from the scene of war. Lovelace wrote poems expressing a chivalry and ideal loyalty which might have been appropriate to earlier wars than this, and directed at an audience of fellow courtiers, rather than the general public. Not surprisingly, it was these Caroline poets who wrote in the traditional courtly styles, for a known audience, not directly concerning themselves with politics or war, who have remained more famous than those who were seeking ways to adapt their work to the new conditions.

This sense of writing for a restricted audience also applies to Marvell's war-time poetry. His poems in this period show him working out his personal reaction to the war, reaching his final conclusion in the "Horatian Ode," of which the closing lines are addressed not to the people but to Cromwell. Milton's sonnets are also restricted to a defined audience, though their sharply concentrated attack and praise was intended to strike the public too. One might say that these sonnets bear a relation to his political prose similar to that of the headlines to a newspaper report: they contain the essence of his political feelings and beliefs, and the taut phrasing and concentration of emotion carry

weight today, though the original quarrels may be forgotten. Marvell and Milton exhibited superior judgement in not lending their poetry to openly propagandist purposes, but to the expression of their deep personal concern with the issues at stake. Milton confined his polemics to prose, and Marvell turned to political poetry only when the war was over, and it seemed that the printed word, rather than the sword, might have an influence on policy.

To sum up therefore, it seems that political poetry in this period failed when for lack of ability, time or practice the poet could not give his work a level of interest beyond the purely topical, and when he wrote, by obligation or choice, from a purely one-sided, partisan standpoint. Wither is almost enough in himself to disprove any assertion that the puritan spirit was more particularly suited to poetry. What makes the few political poems of Milton and Marvell so strikingly different from all others is the weight of personal feeling, over-riding the influence of fashion, party or dogma, which few poets in this period could escape; and the artistic control of this emotion, a necessity too frequently ignored by the other poets writing in and of the war.

If the needs of party politics too often overcame the artistic consciences of the major political poets, the cavalier poets, even in their non-political poetry, wrote at best with freshness and grace, and at worst with competence, but following fashionable conventions to which they could not give the same force and strength as had the Elizabethan and early Jacobean poets. The individual voice was subdued, not by the demands of party, but by the demands of convention.

It is, however, the three cavalier poets, Brome, Denham and

Cleveland who provide the best links with the following age, when political poetry reached its zenith. Just as many conditions combined at the start of war to produce political verse, so conditions at the Restoration were such as to ensure the continuation of the new genre, and to confirm the shift in style from the Caroline age.

The restoration of the monarchy was the result of negotiation, not the absolute defeat of the opposition. Thus the way was clear for the development of a party system based on the former divisions. Roundheads and Cavaliers were replaced by the Country and Court parties (and these in turn by the Whigs and the Tories). The existence of political parties ensured a continued need for political propaganda. The royalists at first hoped that political writing would cease at the Restoration. The first statute of the new Cavalier Parliament was a Treason Act which prohibited "all printing, writing, preaching ... speaking" against the King.² Sir Roger L'Estrange, in charge of the two official newsbooks at the Restoration, deplored the necessity of permitting them:

Supposing the press in order, the people in their right wits, and news or no news to be the question, a Public Mercury should never have my vote, because I think it makes the multitude too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors, and too pragmatistical and censorious, and gives them not only an itch but a kind of colourable right and license to be meddling with the government.³

But the new "pragmatistical and censorious" attitude was found not only in politics but in all thought, as the seventeenth century progressed. The result of the war was merely to confirm in politics the sceptical, empiricist views which were already found in science and philosophy. Appeals to tradition and authority were no longer accepted, logical argument or empirical demonstration was required. Even in religion, the individual was a "protestant" against dogma and practices imposed by

authority. While the basis of royal authority had been examined by philosophers and theologians, their theories were ultimately less influential than the practical demonstration that kings retain their power neither by divine nor hereditary right, but while the greater or more powerful section among their subjects accepts their rule. With the defeat of Charles I, the cause of absolute monarchy was also lost. There was no divinely ordered hierarchy of power in the state, and henceforth the people were always concerned in the political process.

Thus the flood of political literature was not to be stopped at the Restoration. The changes in society, accelerated if not effected by the war, had gone too deep. Economically and politically the middle classes were slowly replacing the aristocracy, "their Superiors," in importance, and also providing the main audience for writers. Just as power in the state was beginning to move from a narrow to a wide basis, from King to people, so writers began to look upon the public, not the private patron, as their chief support. For political literature, the parties took the place of patrons.

Nevertheless, the Court was still the focus of the best poets, though it was soon clear to both poets and public that the pre-war Court and society had not been and could not be restored at the same time as the monarchy. The poetry appropriate to a small, leisured, self-sufficient world of gentleman poets was not to be revived, Marvell's satires were only one of many indications that the King could no longer expect to be sheltered from reality by a curtain of courtly panegyric. Indeed, the idea of representing Charles II as the re-incarnation of the Royal Martyr was somewhat grotesque. Charles and his court were possibly the

most cynical group in the kingdom, as witnessed by the tone of court poetry such as Rochester's.

The scepticism, the lack of deep emotion or ideals, of Brome's verse, was thus to be typical of the Restoration period, and was to be evident in its political verse.

If Brome's work foreshadowed the tone, Cleveland was responsible for developing the dominant genre in this period, political satire. Now that the conflict was between parties rather than armies, and the basic constitutional issues were no longer at stake, more detachment was possible. The best political satire of this age is still enjoyable because its tone is urbanely mocking, and its favoured weapon is ridicule rather than abuse. In Absalom and Achitophel, Dryden did not create a row of fairground targets, but a gallery of living portraits, a tapestry of figures whose relation to the main design the reader can observe and follow with interest. Cowley too had used a biblical plot with some contemporary political significance, in Book IV of Davideis, but he had failed to give his work sufficient interest at either level to ensure success. In particular, his work lacked humour. The Restoration poets again had the advantage here over those writing political poetry during the Interregnum, in that the position of their parties was never so desperate that humour could seem an inappropriate or inadequate weapon.

Cleveland's political poetry had too much vigour, and Cowley's too little: but more than this, their use of the metaphysical style, "common thoughts in obscure language" as Dryden said of Cleveland (I, 52), distinguished their verse from that of the Restoration period. The demands of war propaganda had already shown that immediate intelligibility was a

more important quality than striking extravagance or compression of thought, and the post-war intellectual climate was not likely to favour the re-introduction of the metaphysical style, though the continuing importance of political poetry was not the only inhibiting factor. The new rationalism in science, "preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen and Merchants before that of Wits and Scholars,"⁴ was also influencing all of literature. Poetry, unlike prose, did not seek to use the language of the artisans, but it did avoid the language of the (metaphysical) wit and scholar. It sought the same clarity as the scientists, based itself on reason rather than emotion, and favoured explicit rather than implicit meaning.

The heroic couplet, as Denham and Waller had developed it, was the ideal medium for the rational exposition of ideas, and the diction of these poets, largely free of colloquialisms or obscurity, was also favoured by the Restoration poets.

Thus various aspects of the verse of Brome, Cleveland and Denham links their political poetry with that of the succeeding age. Of the three, only Cleveland was a metaphysical poet. As Felix Schelling pointed out in his article "Ben Jonson and the Classical School" (1898)⁵ the Jonsonian style finally prevailed, and imaginative literature lost to the literature of understanding: ultimately, Schelling declared, the classical influence was closer to the spirit of prose than the spirit of poetry. This belief that Dryden and Pope were classics of our prose might be more readily held by critics close to the poetry of the Romantic age, but when the metaphysical, neo-classical and romantic schools are seen from a longer perspective, an appreciation of their

differing qualities does not lead to a judgement that any one style is more poetic than the other.

If there had been no Civil War, causing the rapid growth of political writing, the evolution of English poetry would probably have been almost the same, and even somewhat faster, towards the restrained classical style of the Augustan age. Jonson's influence would still have superseded that of Donne, who, on the whole, looked back to the richer Elizabethan period than forward to the more rational world, favouring restraint and clarity. The world picture was becoming less magical and more mechanical. The changes in literary style on the continent, particularly in France, would also have had their influence, though the exile of the English Court and many of its poets in France undoubtedly caused this influence to be more rapidly felt. The war's most definite effect on poetry was to hasten the end of coterie and courtly verse, and to hasten the development of satire, the prevailing Augustan mode, by loosening the restraints of censorship. The growth of the party system, another result of the war, also provided more abundant targets for the political satirist, and at the same time offered more, though not complete, protection for the satirist working for a party. The increase in the quantity of both writers and readers led to a change in quality. The effects may be summed up by saying that poetry was no longer private but public, no longer for a small group but for the whole of society.⁶ The growth of the press and of the reading public, as a result of the war, marked the beginning of the gradual shift from poetry to prose as the dominant medium, in belles lettres as in journalism. Ballad and satire might still be employed in political propaganda, for their extra attractiveness and entertainment value, but the public became

used to political argument and comment in the prose newsbooks and pamphlets and tracts. Writers, and politicians, discovered that the many purposes of political writing were better fulfilled in prose than in poetry. The political poetry of the Civil War and Restoration periods gives as much information about political opinions as does the prose, but this remained the case only for a relatively short time. Political poetry soon ceased to be an important genre, just as poetry itself was in time superseded by prose as the dominant medium in literature. The Civil War had played a part in these changes, but ultimately the war itself was only the most striking symbol of deeper changes in thought and in society, which were inevitably reflected in literature.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹The first general post for private letters was established in England in 1637, on a once-weekly basis. From 1641, letters between London and the provinces were carried twice-weekly.

²For the purposes of this thesis, the war will be taken to cover the years 1639 (the King's first campaign against the Scots) to 1649.

³The term "Parliament" is used throughout to signify those in opposition to the King, though the group opposing him, and dominating the legislature, changed its composition in the course of the war.

⁴For the sake of convenience, the term "poet" is taken to exclude balladeers.

⁵Under the Stuarts, royal panegyric had reached exceptional heights in unqualified praise of the monarch, as James and Charles proclaimed the theory of Divine Right as an indisputable fact rather than a useful abstraction. One may question whether the poets wrote their adulatory verse because they were convinced by the theory, or whether their poetry helped to convince the King of his infallibility. The answer to the former question may be supplied by an examination of the poetry they wrote during the Civil War. The latter must remain in the realm of conjecture.

⁶"Major" poets, in this context, are those whose poetry in the war period includes a significant proportion of political verse, as defined here. The names of these poets head their respective chapters, within which "minor" political poets are referred to for purposes of comparison or contrast. "Minor" poets, in this sense, include, for example, Suckling and Cartwright, who died early in the war-period, and even Milton and Marvell, who wrote almost no political poetry during the war.

Chapter II

¹Edward Phillips, Theatrum Poetarum (1674), quoted in The Poems of John Cleveland, eds. Morris and Withington, xx -- hereafter cited as Cleveland. All subsequent page references are to this edition.

²173. In most of his remarks, Winstanley is adapting the words of earlier commentators. This work is hereafter referred to as Winstanley, English Poets.

³Cleveland, xli. Not all poems in these editions were certainly by Cleveland. His reputation was so high that anonymous political verse was sometimes ascribed to him.

⁴Johnson, Lives of the Poets, I, "Life of Cowley," 13. Subsequent quotations, all from volume I of this edition of Johnson's work, will be identified by his name, and the title of each "Life."

⁵Winstanley, English Poets, 175.

⁶See Courthope, History of English Poetry, III, 298, Previté-Orton, Political Satire in English Poetry, 63, and Nevo, The Dial of Virtue, 4.

⁷Before 1647, his works were circulated in manuscript or published as anonymous pamphlets or broadsides. (As it was not possible, with every poem quoted in this thesis, to establish if and how it was published before appearing in the poet's collected works, no titles have been italicized, to avoid the implication that poems with titles in quotation marks were definitely never published separately. Where a poem is known to have been published separately, this fact is usually mentioned in the text.)

⁸This poem dates from before the war, though Cleveland later added lines making it appropriate to Charles' situation during the war.

⁹The words "zealot," "zeal," "zealous" generally indicate a reference to the Puritans, in cavalier verse of this period.

¹⁰See Wedgwood, The King's Peace, 332. On the vital importance of the religious question in the war, see also Clarendon, Selections from the History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars, 26 -- hereafter cited as Clarendon, Selections.

¹¹The Plays and Poems of William Cartwright, ed. Evans, 555 -- hereafter cited as Cartwright.

¹²SMECTYMNUUS was formed from the initials of five Puritans who, in 1641, composed a pamphlet supporting presbyterian government of the Church of England.

¹³Only Cleveland's most representative satires have been chosen here. Of the others, "Upon Sir Thomas Martin" (53), dating from 1643, demonstrates his humorous mockery with a slighter subject, and "The Hue and Cry after Sir John Presbyter" (45), dating from 1646, shows the satirist reduced almost to incoherence -- or at least to incomprehensibility -- by his indignation at the success of his opponents (the presbyterian form of Protestantism was made the official religion of the state in 1646). The insults rarely exceed the length of a couplet, or even one line, which gives an impression of stuttering wrath, too uncontrolled to be poetry.

¹⁴A reference to Joshua: "And Joshua made peace with [the men from Gibeon] and made a league with them" (9, 1. 15), but later found that the men had deceived him. The reference is apparently to Charles' again trusting the Scots, who had already once broken their word.

¹⁵Vaughan's Works, ed. Martin, 625. His dates are 1622-1695.

¹⁶All quotations in this paragraph are from Winstanley, English Poets, 175-6. For a discussion of the belief in the satirist's magical power to destroy enemies, see Elliot, "The Satirist and Society," ELH, XXI (1954), 237.

Chapter III

¹Reprinted in The Works of the English Poets, ed. Chalmers, VI, 641 -- hereafter cited as Chalmers, Poets. All subsequent page references for Brome's poems are to this edition.

²Aubrey, Brief Lives, "Samuel Butler," 45 -- hereafter cited as Aubrey.

³Winstanley, English Poets, 171.

⁴Puritan expressions opposed to a cavalier oath, of a type which shocked their opponents.

⁵Brome even expresses a sentiment more commonly found among the Puritans: "Trust not in soldiers, though they seem so stout;/ Where sin's within, vain is defence without."

⁶For the difference between Presbyterians and Independents, see Hill, The Century of Revolution, 126-129. The latter, led by Cromwell, "wanted an all-out war fought to a decisive conclusion" (127), while the former were prepared, even in 1648, to treat with the King. The Independents also wanted religious toleration, neither episcopacy nor presbytery to be the sole forms of church organisation. Brome refers to the fact that Cromwell and the army could control both Church and Parliament.

⁷For an explanation of the democratic aims of the Levellers, see Hill, Century of Revolution, 129-133.

⁸Eikon Basilike, published at Charles' death and allegedly by him, seeks to establish this parallel, and Brome must have had it in mind when referring to "your books" in this poem.

⁹Not discussed here: they are reprinted in Chalmers and in The Cavalier Poets, ed. Robin Skelton.

¹⁰See the poem quoted by C.V. Wedgwood on page 129 of Poetry and Politics under the Stuarts.

¹¹Rump, I, "To the Reader."

¹²If the gentleman had "conceived it not so proper" to stir up old animosities, they would scarcely have permitted these works to be republished at all.

¹³Robert Herrick (1591-1674), largely uninvolved with the war in his Devonshire parish, also paints an idealistic picture of "His Cavalier," more sailor than soldier, but above all a courageous "virtuous man." See The Poems of Robert Herrick, ed. Martin, 300 -- all subsequent page references for his poetry are to this edition, hereafter cited as Herrick.

¹⁴See, for example, Winstanley, English Poets, 170, and the commendatory poem by Francis Lenton on page 12 of The Poems of Richard Lovelace, ed. C.H. Wilkinson, -- all subsequent page references to his poems are to this edition, hereafter cited as Lovelace.

¹⁵Lovelace, lxxxvi (Brome) and 8 (Marvell). It is interesting that both poets stress that Lovelace's most enthusiastic supporters are "Ladies [who] love/ to kiss those accents;" (lxxxvii). Anthony à Wood also reported that he was granted his M.A. at Oxford "at the request of a great lady"(xx). Perhaps from this we can infer his status as lover and scholar, to complete the terms of the "Sidneyan" comparison.

¹⁶He fought for foreign powers, but most of his time in England during the Civil War was spent in prison, for royalist activities, or on bail. The poem "To Lucasta" possibly refers to his going to fight abroad.

¹⁷Lovelace was imprisoned in 1642 for his part in presenting the Kentish Petition to Parliament, in defence of the episcopacy, and again in 1648, when he was among those captured by the parliamentary forces at the fall of Maidstone.

¹⁸Lovelace's song "The Vintage to the Dungeon" (46) was possibly written for inclusion in the third act of William Cartwright's play The Royal Slave, performed in 1636. This would account for its tone, which is otherwise more typical of Brome than of Lovelace. See Willa McEvans' article "Lovelace's Concept of Prison Life in 'The Vintage to the Dungeon'," PQ, XXVI (October, 1947), 62.

¹⁹L'Estrange, 1616-1704, "An Imprisoned Royalist," Poetry of the English Renaissance, eds. Hebel and Hudson, 881, 11. 49-50 and 53-54. Hereafter cited as Hebel & Hudson, Poetry.

²⁰Herrick wrote some lines of panegyric on this occasion which blandly overlook the fact of Charles' imprisonment in his former palace, and stress only the return of peace to the Kingdom:

Welcome, Great Caesar, welcome now you are,
As dearest Peace, after destructive Warre:

Welcome as slumbers; or as beds of ease
After our long, and peevish sicknesses. (300)

This poem, like many of those by Brome and Lovelace, and other cavalier poets, was meant to be set and sung to music.

²¹This was all too often the motive for employing metaphysical wit. It became a matter of fashion, rather than the most suitable instrument for expressing the complexity of the poet's thought and emotion.

²²Lovelace, lxxii. He wrote other poems on the war, notably "A Mock Song" (154) and "A Mock Charon" (161), both "attacking" propaganda. The main concern here, however, is with Lovelace's representation of the ideal cavalier. Willa McEvans discusses the former poem in "Richard Lovelace's 'Mock Song'," PQ, XXIV (1945), 317-328.

²³"An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Essays of John Dryden, ed. Ker, I, 36 -- hereafter cited as Dryden.

²⁴Suckling's scepticism was possibly fostered by contact with the Libertin philosophers while he was fighting abroad (1627-1632). They derived from Montaigne their distrust of ethical idealism. See Henderson, "Traditions of Précieux and Libertin in Suckling's poetry," ELH, IV (September, 1937), 274.

²⁵The Works of Sir John Suckling, ed. Thompson, 322 -- all subsequent page references for Suckling are to this edition, hereafter cited as Suckling. "Henry German" was Lord Henry Jermyn, the favourite and close advisor of the Queen, at whose request he was raised to the peerage. See Wedgwood, The King's War, 231. Suckling must have hoped that his words would reach the King by this intermediary. The letter was also published, anonymously, in 1641, which suggests a more widely propagandist purpose.

²⁶See Brome, "The Politician," 37 above.

²⁷A possible exception is his mocking reply to verses accusing him and his gaily-dressed troops of cowardice in the first Scottish campaign (Chalmers, Poets, 489), but this is merely an exchange of insults, including the assertions that judgements are relative (Suckling, 74, st. 3) and the Scots hypocritical (75, sts. 4 and 5).

²⁸See Wedgwood, The King's Peace, 272-280, for an account of the ending of Charles' first Scottish campaign which proves how apposite were these remarks in Suckling's play.

Chapter IV

¹Banks, The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham, 59 -- hereafter cited as Denham. All subsequent page references for Denham are to this edition, except Cooper's Hill, q.v. It is recorded that Charles II, in exile, urged

Denham to write again, suggesting "arguments to divert and put off the evil hours of our banishment" (60). The resulting poems illustrate the difference in temperament between Charles II and his father, as well as Denham's wide poetic range -- from the didactic to the ribald. See, for example, the poems on pages 103, 107 and 111.

²See Wedgwood, The King's Peace, Bk. 2, Ch. 2.

³Herrick's epigram "Caution in Councell" indicates that such an excuse was necessary: "Know when to speake; for many times it brings/ Danger to give the best advice to Kings." (318)

⁴Johnson, "Life of Denham," 58.

⁵Brendan O Hehir, Expans'd Hieroglyphicks, 9. All page references for Cooper's Hill are to this edition, hereafter cited as O Hehir.

⁶He also widened some references so that they were applicable to events both during and after the war. See, for example, O Hehir, 148, ft. 15. The stag, in particular, is identified with Charles I. See footnotes on pages 154-158, and the full discussion of these changes, on pages 244-250.

⁷The Subtler Language, 76.

⁸The indictment includes a few lines of characteristically subtle, but uncynical, insight into political actions (in this case, Henry's seizing the wealth of the Church):

And he might think it just, the cause and time
Considered well; for none comitts a Crime
Appearing Such, but as tis understood
A Reall, or (at least) a seeming good. (84, ll. 139-142)

⁹The lines on the Thames which were so highly praised by Dryden, first appeared in the 1654 edition of the poem. See O Hehir, 150-151.

¹⁰See, for example, Ben Jonson's poem "To Penshurst," ll. 29-38.

¹¹cf. Brome, "A Lamentation," (29 above) and Denham, "Speech against Peace" (59 below).

¹²See Clarendon, Selections, 143-145, on the necessity of sacrificing Strafford. Various accounts have been given of Strafford's motives in telling the King to sign his death warrant (Compare, for example, Clarendon and C.V. Wedgwood, The King's Peace, 423-8.) Denham's simile is, of course, rather tactful than realistic.

¹³Charles' remorse for this act was never assuaged, and he declared, at his own execution, that it was a just punishment for having permitted that of Strafford. Denham takes up this idea in his 1654 version of Cooper's Hill, in which the stag represents Charles I. See O Hehir, 155-6, ll. 275-6, and footnote.

¹⁴Denham, 153, ft. 1.

¹⁵Banks points out that this also imitates a line in Waller -- See Denham, 153, ft. 1.

¹⁶For a full treatment of Denham's use of the "discordia concors" motif in this poem, see O Hehir, 165 et seqq. Only those aspects of it which reflect his political ideas are mentioned here.

¹⁷Not surprisingly, these lines were dropped from the 1654 edition, after the parliamentary rebellion had succeeded, not merely in defending the people's rights against the king, but in removing him altogether.

¹⁸This draft was published in 1643, in Oxford, where the King had established his headquarters.

¹⁹Notably Clarendon himself, and Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland. The latter had voted for Strafford's execution, but fought and died on the King's side in the Civil War.

²⁰Dryden, II, "Original and Progress of Satire," 108. The other "father" was Waller.

²¹Hampden (1594-1643) had instigated the Ship Money Case and was one of the five members Charles had sought to arrest. He was a leader of the M.P.'s most opposed to the King. At this time there was still a large group in Parliament which favoured peace.

²²See Clarendon, Selections, 253, for an expression of the royalists' indignation at this misuse of the pulpit. The Puritans might well have retorted by pointing out that Charles' attempt to force ministers and congregations to accept the Laudian style of worship was a political act in itself, in the context of the times.

²³Banks gives comprehensive notes on the circumstances occasioning these two poems, but does not mention the possibility that in the lines: "Great William the Con so fast he did run/ That he left half his name behind him" (134), Denham is punning in French. The parliamentary general, Waller, was nicknamed "William the Conqueror." The French use the three-letter word to suggest the height of stupidity.

²⁴It may be significant that the poem, printed in 1650, was omitted from the 1668 edition of Denham's works, as was the elegy on Croke. The epitaph of Strafford, greatly revised, was included. The revisions stress the injustice of the sentence, which could hardly be emphasised during the lifetime of the King who had permitted it to be carried out.

²⁵Cherniak, The Poetry of Limitation, 40, declares that Waller was one of the moderate party in Parliament, and certainly he had reason to be of divided loyalties (see ft. 26, below), but he was unlike the moderates, who wanted, like Denham, merely to limit the King's power, and who would

not accept Cromwell in his place. Waller gave his support to whoever held power in the state.

²⁶His return to England during the Commonwealth was no doubt facilitated by his being related to Cromwell, Hampden, Waller the parliamentary general, and Sir Hardress Waller, one of those who signed the King's death warrant.

²⁷Johnson, "Life of Waller," 204. Subsequent page references to Johnson on Waller are to this essay.

²⁸Complete Poems of John Wilmot, ed. Vieth, "An Allusion to Horace," 123, ll. 57-58. The irony of this couplet becomes explicit denunciation in Johnson: "he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be scorned as a prostituted mind" (204).

²⁹The general opinion was that his poems on Cromwell were better than those addressed to Charles II. One can hardly take this as an indication of where his political sympathies lay, however, since when Charles II pointed this out to him, he replied: "Poets, sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth" (ibid., 186). One of his panegyrics to Charles II was, however, so far from the truth that it gave rise to a series of famous satires. His praise of what was in fact a disastrous naval battle led to Marvell's adopting his device of giving "Instructions to a Painter" to demonstrate the falsity of the flattering picture. (The satires were originally ascribed to Denham.)

Chapter V

¹Cowley's poem "To the Bishop of Lincoln, upon his Enlargement out of the Tower"* where he had been cast by Charles, praises the bishop -- released and restored to favour in 1641 -- without offering any criticism of the Laudian policies for opposing which he had been arrested. It thus differs from Denham's "Elegy on Judge Crooke," which praises the judge's resistance to Charles' policies.
*Cowley, Poems, ed. A.R. Waller, 28. All subsequent page references are to this edition.

²Cowley was arrested a year after his return, in 1655, suspected of being a spy. In prison, he wrote or rewrote some poems, perhaps designed to allay the suspicions of Cromwell, certainly equivocal enough to raise the suspicions of the royalists. These works are "Destiny" (192), in which a game of chess may symbolise the Civil War, lost by "th'ill conduct of a Mated King" (st. 1), an accusation softened by the basic theme that we are all the playthings of destiny. The ode to "Brutus" (195) was more offensive to the royalists, being seen as a defence of regicide. Book IV of Cowley's unfinished epic "Davideis" could be interpreted as advocating a commonwealth government rather than a monarchy. This section may have suggested to Dryden, an admirer of Cowley, how effectively a biblical narrative could be used to reflect a contemporary political situation. See Nethercot, Abraham

Cowley: The Muses' Hannibal, Ch. 10 -- hereafter cited as Nethercot, Cowley.

³Cowley, Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses, ed. A.R. Waller, 403. All subsequent page references with 'E' before the number are to this edition.

⁴The group of poets meeting at his country home, Great Tew, before the war, included Sandys, Jonson, and Waller, who all furthered the development of the heroic couplet.

⁵Nethercot, Cowley, 142. The dates for Cowley's departure from and return to England are taken from this book.

⁶Both were members of the moderate party in Parliament. Falkland went further than Waller in voting against the King's policies, but in 1642 he joined Charles against Parliament, while Waller retained his seat there, and, in favour with both sides, tried to mediate between them. Like Cowley, he took no active part in the war before his exile.

⁷Poetical Works of Waller and Denham, ed. Gilfillan, 121, l. 6 -- all subsequent page references for Waller are to this edition.

⁸The same sentiment is expressed by Cowley, in his poem "On the Late Civil War":

Streams of Black tainted Blood the Field besmear,
But pure well coloured drops shine here and there:
They scorn to mix with flouds of baser veines. (E. 474)

⁹It is somewhat ironical that all the poets who, from the beginning of Charles' reign had urged him to fight abroad to restore England's prestige, should see him instead embark on civil war, and the longed-for victories abroad achieved by Cromwell.

¹⁰The fact that such sentiments could be addressed to, and accepted by Charles seems to indicate something of the unreality of Charles' image of his own kingly rôle.

¹¹The play was revised and published at the Restoration, with the title Cutter of Coleman Street, and was then accused of being anti-Cavalier in tone. Cowley strenuously denied any such intention.

¹²Parliament was to order the closing of all theatres in 1642. See Hill, Century of Revolution, 96.

¹³See Nethercot, Cowley, 83, and Nevo, The Dial of Virtue, 64, for conflicting opinions as to its authorship. All poems of doubtful authorship are excluded from this survey.

¹⁴Cowley continued to serve the Queen in exile, after Charles' execution. The attack on the Catholics may partly explain why Cowley never acknowledged the satire, since they were in fact an important group

at court, in the reigns of both Charles I and his son.

¹⁵A line from Cowley's "Poem on the Late Civil War" refers to the tendency of the Parliamentarians to "make all Papists whom you cannot beat" (E. 480).

¹⁶Cleveland, 29, 11. 27-28.

¹⁷As in the poem on the birth of the Duke of Gloucester, Cowley occasionally betrays an unsure touch in dealing with the scene of war. As the English and Scots armies face each other across the Tweed, Cowley stresses the terror of the sight by writing that "... all the affrighted Fish sank down apace" (E. 469).

¹⁸Cleveland, 37, 11. 161-164.

¹⁹In the early years of the war, Parliament commonly claimed that they fought for the King, and against those who had led him astray. See chapter on George Wither, below.

²⁰The Battle of Edgehill, 1642.

²¹The sentiment is reminiscent of that in Cowley's poem to Lord Falkland, who died in the same battle, Newbury, that induced Cowley to abandon the poem.

²²The most complete royalist account of the Civil War, in poetry, is found in "An Elegy upon the most Incomparable King, Charles the First" (The Poems of Henry King, ed. Crum, 117). It incorporates nearly all the points made in the political poetry so far discussed, both for the King and against Parliament, and adds an unusually open reproach to God for permitting a parliamentary victory:

O God! canst thou these profanations like?
If not, why is thy Thunder slow to strike
The cursed authors? (260, 11. 231-233)

and in the closing lines:

But he whose trump proclaims, Revenge is mine,
Bids us our sorrow by our hope confine,
And reconcile our Reason to our Faith,
Which in thy Ruin such conclusions hath;
It dares conclude, God does not keep His Word
If Zimri dies in peace that slew his Lord. (267)

Though the poem was first drafted in 1649, Margaret Crum points out "it cannot have been finished and printed before 1659," (214) and hence it is excluded from detailed study here.

²³Cartwright, 18-19. All subsequent page references for Cartwright's poems are to this edition.

²⁴In particular his imitations of Pindar's odes, written in Jersey during his exile. See Nethercot, Cowley, Ch. IX.

²⁵His essays make enjoyable reading, and in his later "Vision, concerning the Government of Oliver Cromwell (E. 342), an attack published in 1661, he employs a combination of prose, and verse, which suggests that he considered political argument as a subject better fitted for prose.

Chapter VI

¹He figures in this rôle as "Chronomastix" in Jonson's masque Time Vindicated, produced in 1622 or 23.

²Winstanley, English Poets, 166.

³Wither, Publications of the Spenser Society, No. 28, title page. Subsequent quotations from these Spenser Society reprints will hereafter be identified as Wither, followed by the series number.

⁴Wither, No. 13, Vox Pacifica, 78 and 80.

⁵Wither, No. 12, Dedication. All page refernces are to the number at the top of the page, where present.

⁶Ibid., 49.

⁷Ibid., 32-33, and see Clarendon, Selections, 253, for confirmation that this argument was used against the King.

⁸Ibid., 51, and see Herrick: "That Prince, who may do nought but what is just/ Rules but by leave, and takes his Crowne on trust" (331). Many of Wither's qualifications are sound law, under a constitutional monarchy, but this is one of the things Charles was fighting to avoid.

⁹John M. Wallace gives a clear and concise account of the arguments put forward on both sides in the civil war debates, in the first chapter of Destiny his Choice.

¹⁰As an example of how Wither repeats himself, one may take this passage, on page 32 of Campo-Musae:

When [Parliament] commands, the Kings commands they be,
More binding, then his personall Injunction.
In their contempt, dishonoured is he,
And disobeyed in his noblest function.
In his, we but his Person disobey;
In their, his Powre, and Office we gainsay.

Evidently repetition is to take the place of argument in convincing his readers.

¹¹Wither, No. 13.

¹²This whole passage, 127-131, is reminiscent of Cromwell's words to the Church of Scotland: "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken" (letter to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1650).

¹³At this stage in English history, there was no idea of a true party system. It was believed that, ideally, Parliament should speak with one voice. See Hill, The Century of Revolution, 174-175, for evidence that Wither's basic arguments were those of the parliamentary side.

¹⁴Spenser Society, #12, Campo-Musae, 3. For a comparison of Wither's plain style with the "elevated" style of Cleveland, in 'The Kings return,' see this passage from Vox Pacifica, pages 137-138:

. . . For, wheresoe're
[The King] bideth, when his Parliament shall sit,
The Kingship, vertually, is alwaies there,
And cannot possibly divide from it.
The Person of a King, may ramble forth,
As his own fancie hurries him about,
Or do things derogating from his worth,
Or die, or from the Kingdome be cast out;
And, yet the Kingdome, and the Kingship too,
Continue still, as they were wont to do.

(The argument contradicts Cleveland, and also Denham, who claimed, in Cooper's Hill, that the King makes the court, and not vice-versa.)

¹⁵He sometimes achieved an unintentional comic effect, as when he listed the names of thirty-five heroes on the parliamentary side, and hopes there may be thousands more: "Whose memorie, shall never be forgot:/ Though, here, to name them, I remember not," Campo-Musae, 71.

¹⁶Ibid., 57.

¹⁷More accurately one might say "lines which rhyme." Aubrey reports that Denham asked the King to spare Wither's life after a battle "for that whilst G.W. lived, he should not be the worst Poet in England" (93). Such modesty, even in sarcasm, is excessive. Denham could hardly compete with lines like these:

Thou know'st his Wilfulnesse doth us compell
(Since nor his Parl'aments, Thy Lawes, nor His,
Nor, other course prevails) now to appeale
(In that, which at this time, depending is)
To thy Arbitrement: and, that, the Sword
May to our differences, an end afford.

(Vox Pacifica, 150)

¹⁸Campo-Musae, 18.

the supporters of Parliament should trust the Scots. (In later poems he turns to criticism of Parliament, and finally of Charles II. His attacks, so ubiquitously directed, make him the perfect antithesis of Waller.)

²⁹Complete Works of Andrew Marvell, ed. Grosart, III, "The Rehearsal Transposed" (1672), 212.

³⁰Andrew Marvell: Complete Poetry, ed. George deF. Lord, 212, 11. 1-2 and 12. All subsequent page references for Marvell are to this edition. Marvell and Lovelace probably met at Cambridge in 1637. See Lovelace, xxi.

³¹Lovelace, lxxvi, l. 4. Brome looks forward to the time when Lovelace's poems shall bring about a "Restauration" of poetry. The political implication is clear, and possibly explains why this tribute was not included when Lucasta was published.

³²Ibid., l. 9.

³³Marvell specifies "an Horatian Ode" as though suggesting not only the form, but the tone of moderation, of sympathy with both sides which characterises much of Horace's political poetry. The name also suggests a possible comparison of Cromwell to Augustus, as a bringer of peace after a period of civil war.

³⁴For evidence that these lines are not ironical, see Wallace, Destiny His Choice, 85-88.

Chapter VII

¹Their deaths, with those of Falkland and Godolphin, incidentally illustrate one of the most banally obvious of war's negative effects on poetry: it kills the poets.

²Lord, Poems on Affairs of State, I, xxxiii. As late as 1683 a writer was executed for his satirical attacks on Charles II.

³Fraser, Intelligence of the Secretaries of State, 38.

⁴Sprat, "History of the Royal Society," (1677), Spingarn, Seventeenth Century Critical Essays, II, 118.

⁵PMLA, XIII, 229.

⁶The next major shift was also to take place at a time of revolution, this time in France. During this period came the development of Romantic poetry, when the emphasis was moved from society to the individual, from the objective to the subjective.

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